

# Fostering Mental Health In Our Schools

**1950 YEARBOOK**  
**ASSOCIATION FOR SUPERVISION  
AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT**

**NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION  
WASHINGTON, D. C.**

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ASSOCIATION FOR SUPERVISION AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT  
NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION  
1201 Sixteenth Street, N. W.  
Washington 6, D. C.

Price \$3

Second Printing, November 1950  
Third Printing, July 1951  
Fourth Printing, August 1954  
Fifth Printing, November 1962



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## A Word from the Association

THIS yearbook, *Fostering Mental Health in Our Schools*, is a splendid replacement for the helpful 1940 volume, *Mental Health in the Classroom*, which is now out of print. Through the years, the Association has emphasized mental health in many of its activities and publications as one of the important goals of education. We are pleased to present to members and friends a publication which gives attention to problems of mental health within the context of the total process of growth and development. This yearbook joins a distinguished series as one that will have important influence on what happens at the grassroots of education—with the children and youth in classrooms and schools.

The Executive Committee of the Association is most grateful to Caroline Tryon, chairman of the Yearbook Committee; to the other members of the committee, Robert J. Havighurst, Dorothy Oldendorf, and Gladys Willcutt; and to the authors for producing this eminently practical and down-to-earth book in record time. The entire yearbook was completed in about a year by staff members of the University of Chicago's Committee on Human Development, their associates in other departments, and several school people from the Chicago area and elsewhere. Through the past ten years the Chicago group has provided leadership in the study of human development and therefore was eminently qualified to prepare this book.

We are also grateful to the five members of the Department of Fine and Industrial Arts, Teachers College, Columbia University, for their splendid contribution in designing the cover and the illustrations.

The Planning Committee selected "Mental Health for Better Living" as the theme for the 1950 National Conference of the Association in Denver. Here members of the Association had an opportunity to explore further the areas developed in the yearbook—"Factors Determining Development and Behavior," "The Child's Motivations," and "Knowing and Helping the Child." In this way we hope to extend the influence of this useful book to teachers, curriculum workers, supervisors, and administrators in elementary schools, secondary schools, and colleges throughout the country.

WALTER A. ANDERSON, *President*  
*For the Executive Committee*

## Foreword

TEN YEARS have passed since the last ASCD yearbook on mental health.<sup>1</sup> During that time there has accumulated in our libraries a vast amount of knowledge about human behavior and development. Some of this is a synthesis of previously known facts and principles; but much is new information from research on human beings in the psychological, sociological, and biological sciences. Further, in the fields of both research and therapy, an array of techniques has been developed for diagnosis of the well-being of individuals and for furthering their mental health. Much of this knowledge and many of these skills are applicable and are, in fact, basic to good educational practice. This volume, therefore, will review some of these facts and techniques with particular reference to their application in teaching and guiding children in our schools.

The 1950 yearbook, like the 1940 yearbook, is primarily concerned with the healthy development of those who are often called "normal children." It is only incidentally concerned with the deviates, the extremely disturbed and distorted boys and girls. Every child has problems in growing up. Some of these problems can be serious and crippling even for the emotionally robust. In fact, if there were space here to examine the statistics on the mental casualties in our recent war or to refer to the conclusions of some of the experts we could only be perturbed by the amount of anxiety, hostility, and guilt (those feelings so destructive to the individual which he in turn projects destructively upon others) which exist among the "normal" in our population.<sup>2</sup>

We have had to limit and select what is presented here. While each of the three parts of this book has its own introduction, the following gives a brief overview of the contents of this volume:

Part One, "Factors Determining Development and Behavior," discusses many important facts and principles that are essential in understanding or interpreting the information that we may have, or may gather, about any individual or any group.

<sup>1</sup> National Education Association, Department of Supervisors and Directors of Instruction. *Mental Health in the Classroom*. Thirteenth Yearbook, Washington, D. C.; the Department, 1940. 304 p.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander, Franz. *Our Age of Unreason*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1942. Fromm, Eric. *Escape from Freedom*. New York: Farrar and Rhinehart, 1941. Horney, Karen. *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1937.

Part Two, "The Child's Motivations," presents a discussion about a subject that has been a concern through the ages of those responsible for the rearing and training of children. Motivation is the most important single factor in learning. Yet our educational institutions tend to stifle, rather than to foster in our children strong, vital interests in what we believe is important for them to learn.

Part Three, "Knowing and Helping the Child," is concerned with methods which yield valid information, as opposed to biased opinion, about children and which point to specific ways to deal with the child in order to foster mental health.

There is a great deal that is important in the personal well-being of the school child that is left out of this volume. Probably the most important area omitted is that of the mental health of the teacher. Her mental health may well be the primary factor in the school's contribution to the wholesome development of children. We think this should soon be the subject for a yearbook. We have not, except by implication, touched on this subject. But we would add one word: the content of this volume may seem to bring new pressure upon the teacher, new expectancies for change, possibly implied criticism of current practice. We hope, however, that it will open up ways of solving problems, of stimulating new interests in the most important of all professional careers—teaching. There are no final answers in this book. Let it be thought of as an invitation to further learning and satisfaction.

—The 1950 Yearbook Committee





## CHAPTER ONE

# Some Conditions of Good Mental Health

CAROLINE TRYON

IN OUR thinking about good mental health, or even good physical health, our tendency is to think in terms of the *absence* of pathological symptoms. This attitude stems from the fact that historically our research has been in the area of mental and physical disorders. Much of what we know about the "normal" has come by way of studying the diseased, the deviate, the abnormal. The field of medicine, concerned with the physical aspects of the human organism, however, has long since gone beyond the step of "curing." There are extensive programs of "prevention" for both individual patients and the general public.

Preventive mental health programs lag behind. Most of our time, energy, and financial resources are still allocated to the job of "picking-up-the-pieces" in psycho-social disorders, to the "cure" of the emotionally and socially disabled. Psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, social workers, and others are currently trained to diagnose what is wrong and to rehabilitate the mentally ill in our society. Little has yet been done in working out guide lines to create the conditions for *good* mental health.

Mental health is certainly more than the mere absence of emotional disorder or maladaptive behavior. Nor is mental health to be defined as the achievement of such control over our emotional life that we do not show our feelings. There are times when it is right and appropriate to be angry, to be afraid, to be happy or joyous, to be ecstatic. Mentally healthy persons are characterized by a vital, positive emotional approach to living, both in day-to-day experiences and in long-range terms.

As persons concerned with public education, we shall consider in this volume some of the conditions, factors, and guides to good mental health in our American society that will promote the general well-being of the individuals growing up in it.

### The Feeling-Doing-Thinking Aspects of Behavior

Traditionally, the function of our schools has been to train for the thinking aspect of living. And this obligation, more than at any other time in our history, must continue to be one of the basic responsibilities of the school. Our society has never been in greater need of citizens who can think clearly. But learning to think was, and unfortunately still is, regarded by many people as the training of a large isolated "mental muscle." By memorizing facts and acquiring certain mental skills the student is supposed to grow into a rational adult capable of dealing with all kinds of problems, including emotional and social problems. We know now that such all-around competency does not grow out of an educational program aimed exclusively at "training the mind."

A few decades ago some leading educators began to question the didactic, the "telling-them," the "precept" method of teaching children what they should know, what they should do, how they should act. Instead, they argued, if children and youth had more direct experiences with the materials, the processes, and the products of our world—both physical and social—they would, with help, arrive at sounder knowledge and they would achieve greater readiness to do, to act, to behave effectively when confronted with new experiences, both real and vicarious.

However, in these *doing* or action programs, it was assumed that the feeling aspect of living would become mature more or less automatically. We are finding that this does not happen quite so automatically. Every child must have help in growing toward the goal of an emotionally mature adulthood. After these long years we are recognizing our responsibility for helping children to learn to feel in certain ways.<sup>1</sup> Most teachers and most teacher-training institutions say, "Yes, of course, we are interested in, and feel responsible for, the *whole child*, for his emotional and social growth, as well as his intellectual growth." But most teachers are not prepared to take on these responsibilities; they have not been trained to do so. Furthermore, our teacher-training institutions still are not doing an adequate job of such preparation.

### The Socializing Process

Not so many years ago we talked rather glibly about "human nature" as though most of our adult social and emotional patterns were determined at the time of our conception and were inherent.<sup>2</sup> Now both social scientists

<sup>1</sup> Prescott, Daniel A. *Emotion and the Educative Process*. A Report of the Committee on the Relation of Emotion to the Educative Process. Washington, D. C.: American Council on Education, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> Grabbe, Paul. *We Call It Human Nature*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939.

and laymen are more cautious. The findings of scientists, as well as our experiences as laymen in two world wars, lead us to speculate about what is innately human.<sup>3</sup> We apparently become human through the processes involved in our rearing, sometimes called the process of socialization. If, during the years of infancy and childhood, we had no experiences with human beings, we would not become human at all, but something strange and sub-human.<sup>4</sup> What we call a "human being" is "made," then—not "born." And human nature varies markedly from one type of culture to the next, so that we are impressed with its infinite malleability. We not only become human but we also become American, or Samoan, or Navajo, or French, or English because the people who rear us have certain expectancies—certain beliefs about what are good or desirable human beings; certain beliefs about what are good or desirable ways of behaving; and certain beliefs about what are the best methods of training the young.

The process of learning to become human is loaded with feeling and often with strong emotion. This is because socialization means giving up simple biological satisfactions for other, often delayed, substitute satisfactions that are approved by society. The child, in the very process of growing up among other people, must learn to forego many of his natural impulses. His learning is fraught with emotional overtones.

Those of us responsible for the rearing of children (parents, teachers, and others) must bear certain factors in mind when we try to help the child to become a good human being. We shall discuss the factors of readiness for experiences, dealing with feelings, and integration of the feeling, doing, and thinking aspects of living.

### Readiness for Experiences

Probably more than any other people, Americans—particularly middle-class Americans—are entangled with the concept of precociousness. We mean by precociousness doing something at an earlier age than the average. Parents and teachers consult age or grade norms, and feel elated or depressed when their children exceed or fall below these norms. Even the best of teachers will probably experience satisfaction when, at the end of the year, achievement tests show that her group excels those levels expected in terms of their abilities. But this good teacher will quickly scan the year's experiences to discover if such achievement occurred at the cost of other important learning and development. It is also this good teacher who is

<sup>3</sup> Benedict, Ruth. *Patterns of Culture*, New York: Penguin Books, Inc. 1934. Mead, Margaret. *Cooperation and Competition Among Primitive Peoples*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1937.

<sup>4</sup> Singh, J. S. L. and Zingg, Robert M. *Wolf Children and Feral Man*, New York: Harper and Brothers. (University of Denver, Contribution No. 4), 1942.

concerned when parents want their daughter or son (more often it is a son) skipped to second grade the day he enters school "because he can already read." She realizes that such parents see the grade-skipping as a symbol of precociousness, and that they may have lost sight of the child's all-around development. She sees also that such children may have been denied their birthright—whole-hearted parental love and affection, and that the children must barter for this love with scholastic achievement.

We argue, therefore, that our expectancies for the child's learning must be well within the range of his emotional, social, and physical *readiness*, and not just at the extreme point of his endurance. Learnings which do take place under the latter conditions are usually so suffused with negative attitudes that the learning is emotionally crippling to the learner. If experiences are within the range of readiness, most children will not have to be pushed and forced; they will want to learn.<sup>5</sup>

### Dealing with Feelings

The writer recently was walking one autumn day with a friend in a canyon set aside for the public because of its awe-inspiring beauty. We were very soon aware of an enormous bustling in the canyon; by chance, we found ourselves in the midst of a large group of high-school juniors and seniors (representatives at an interstate conference). We began to listen. There was no question of eavesdropping; the canyon walls rang with their banter—with deprecation, irreverence, and parody of the natural beauty. No word was said (unless it was whispered) to express awe or delight or enjoyment. It became apparent that to have done so would have been regarded as a weakness, and would have incurred a barrage of scoffing. These boys and girls were probably trying, in typical American fashion, to hide or deny their positive aesthetic feelings since one of our characteristic ways of defending ourselves against our feelings is through humor.

Our children tend to learn to suppress feeling very early. Some excerpts from the record of seven-year-old Don suggest (what the fuller record tends to substantiate) that he became afraid and anxious when he allowed himself to express pleasant anticipation or happiness. The following episodes are a part of a record made by his teacher.

*October 25*

Today Don asked me eagerly when we were going to practice our play again. (We had dramatized a story.) I told him we had finished that one, but we could play another. When I asked "Would you like to?"

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<sup>5</sup> See Part Two dealing with "The Child's Motivations"; also Chapters Six and Seven dealing with "Developmental Tasks."

he shrugged and said, "Oh, never mind; it doesn't make any difference," becoming serious and wooden-faced.

*November 10*

Carol brought a butterfly net to school. Don asked me if he might use it at recess. I suggested that he ask her. She told him he could. He turned to me and said, "That's about all I have to do" (as though he felt he should not be so pleased).

*December 6*

Today during music class I played Fred Waring's "The Night Before Christmas." All the children were enjoying it immensely. Don, too, was grinning, but just as soon as he caught my eye, he wiped his smile off in a hurry. He just won't let himself go.

*February 22*

Cynda's pigtails came down today for the third consecutive day. She always laughs about it and hasn't said even once that the boys pulled them. But today Don chuckled as he told me that the boys pull them every day. "Even I did it once," he said. I wonder why he said "even I."

Don, like the adolescent boys and girls in the state park, has already learned that there is something dangerous about expressing feelings, even positive feelings, as though in so doing he becomes vulnerable to something that may be painful or punishing.

But we are not only concerned with the way in which children handle their positive feelings. We are also interested in helping the child deal with his negative feelings as well. Again, this cannot be done by simply denying them or repressing them. Some teachers try to do this, as illustrated in the following observation of a first-grade classroom:

It was telling-and-showing time. Henry's waving had been recognized by the teacher. He stood up and with words spilling over each other told how yesterday he had run after a fire engine, and at the corner he had stumbled over a pile of gravel, torn his trousers, and skinned his knee. Whereupon he lifted one leg of his blue jeans and proudly displayed a damaged area of skin. The other children gave Henry and his knee undivided attention. The teacher fidgeted a few moments, and glancing around, spied the happy-faced Helen and called upon her. Helen immediately launched into a tale of how, last summer when she was on roller skates, she had fallen and hit her head on the cement steps of her porch and cut her forehead open and the doctor had taken two stitches. She, too, pointed to the fading scar and her engrossed audience moved closer to examine it. But the teacher seemed quite uncomfortable and said, "Now, let us just think happy thoughts. Who can tell us a happy story?" Nancy was called upon, and she described how yesterday she had helped her mother clear the front hall closet, getting ready for winter coats and boots. The teacher

nodded approval. The class settled back in their chairs and gave desultory attention to the story.

This teacher believed that if we take steps to shut out unpleasant experiences they disappear, dissolve into thin air. But this is not so. Usually strong feelings that are not recognized, that are denied some socially acceptable outlet, come out in devious ways. Let us look at several episodes in Mary's life.

Mary had many fears. She had above average ability according to the tests, but she was not learning much that the school expected of her in the first grade. She spent much of her time in aimless wandering about the room, or in non-purposeful activity in her seat. Her mother had conferred with her teacher about her failures in school and about her fears. Some of these fears seemed to be real and some, imaginary. For example, Mary had told her teacher, "Last Sunday I was chased by a bull on Grandfather's farm; I just got under the wire fence in time to get away." This seemed to be one of the imaginary fearful experiences which Mary had internalized out of a warning to stay away from a certain pasture.

About ten days later, just before lunch, the teacher announced to the class that they would see a movie when they returned to school that afternoon. Mary's pupils dilated, and she seemed to grow small in her seat. But she returned early from lunch and hung around the teacher's desk. After a time she announced that she didn't feel well. After a minute or two she said she did not like movies. The teacher suggested that she might learn to like them if she went to more of those shown at school. Mary said they hurt her eyes, and she moved restlessly about the room. She returned to ask what the movie was about. The teacher said: "The cow and some of our other animal friends." At this Mary said she felt sick and fled to the girls' room.

In discussing this episode, the question came up in a teacher study group—What could Mary's teacher have done to help her? They thought it would be helpful to tell Mary she could sit by the teacher and even walk down the hall beside her. But the group took sides when it came to accepting and recognizing Mary's real feelings with such a remark as, "If you are afraid (I am afraid of some things, too) you walk and sit with me . . ." <sup>6</sup> Some of the group felt that such recognition would only "stamp in" the fear. They argued that Mary should be told "There's nothing to be afraid of . . . to be afraid of a movie is just silly . . . just go and you will find that it is fun . . ." Mary did not think so; she went home "sick to her stomach."

These teachers again were arguing that we can by precept teach children how they should feel. But Mary was not learning to feel differently about her fears. Her feelings were interfering with her schoolwork, with her relations to others, and with the building of wholesome attitudes toward herself. She was learning, probably quite unconsciously, to translate her

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter Eighteen, "Accepting and Clarifying the Child's Feelings."



anxieties into physical symptoms. These physical symptoms are easier to bear; adults are sympathetic when one is sick; they are unsympathetic when one is afraid. Mary was learning to manage some of her feelings, but in a devious and crippling fashion.

Chisholm comments that the people of "the next generation should not be able to fool themselves as casually and as unconsciously and as easily as we have done. They should not be the same kinds of people who can avoid unpleasant things by not looking at them." Chisholm adds, ". . . the child must have the opportunity to grow into a pattern, but not by precept. There is no use whatever in lecturing children . . ."<sup>7</sup>

By and large, feelings must be expressed if we are going to learn ways of dealing with them that are satisfying to the individual and acceptable to the groups in which he lives.<sup>8</sup> Yet much of the child's learning takes place in a repressive atmosphere that in a sense says to him, "Get rid of your feelings"; or at least, "Don't show your feelings."

How unlike this attitude is that of a group of Eskimos living on an island off the coast of Alaska. They are thought of as a "happy" people by the social scientists who have studied them. Traditionally they have carved small wooden mouthpieces to wear when the enemy invaded the island. They knew they were afraid and that their teeth chattered when they were afraid. Since their chief defense was ambush, they must prevent the enemy from locating them by the sound of their chattering teeth. These primitive people recognized the reality of their own feelings and, at the same time, the reality of the outer world in which they lived.

Some of the same recognition of inner and outer reality is shown by the good nursery school teacher. She does not say to Johnny as he raises a shovel to strike Susan, "Don't do that; that's bad." She is likely to say something of this sort: "I know you are angry at Susan because she knocked down your sandhouse. But you can't hit Susan. It would hurt her. Come with me and we will find some nails and wood; we can pound them into the wood over there at that work bench."

This teacher has acted in an effective way. She has recognized and accepted the feeling; it is real and, in that sense, valid. She has set social limits and given reasons for those limits. She has offered a socially acceptable way of releasing tensions.

<sup>7</sup> Chisholm, Brock, M.D. "A New Look at Child Health." *The Child*, May 1948. (Reprints for sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C. Price 10 cents.)

<sup>8</sup> In most systems of psychotherapy much of the therapeutic process consists of relieving, of re-expressing emotional experiences that have been denied or submerged, and of substituting new action patterns for old defenses.

### The Integration of Feeling, Doing, and Thinking

We have emphasized the *feeling* component of living in this chapter (and in this entire volume) because it has so far been the least explored in applying our knowledge to educational problems and processes. But we do not mean to imply that the feeling aspect can be dealt with independently. "Education of the whole child" remains the main objective of education. Here we are proposing that we see this wholeness in three facets—the emotional or feeling facet, the action or doing facet, and the reasoning or thinking facet. Growth occurs always in all three facets, although not always simultaneously and at the same rate. A growth spurt in one area seems to be followed by a period in which growth in other areas seems to catch up; growth becomes integrated into a larger pattern.

For example, the very young child one day lets go of the chair and walks across the room to his mother. He has been busy "growing this walk" for some time—pulling himself to an upright position, walking around crib and furniture, walking while holding a guiding hand. Then suddenly one day he goes into action—he walks alone. Here learning or development seemed to originate in the doing facet. But it will not be for some months that he will push away over-protecting hands reaching out to help him up the steps, saying, "Me walk by myself." At this point he has integrated the feeling-doing-thinking aspects: feelings of independence and competency in attacking a difficult action pattern that he can tell you about. Sometimes feelings precipitate new action and thinking; sometimes thinking leads to new action and thence to new feeling.

One basic condition of wholesome maturing, of good mental health, is that these three facets of living are open areas—that as growth takes place in one area, changes take place in the others, resulting in new integration. But since our emphasis here is on the feeling aspect of living, we reiterate that the feeling-doing-thinking facets of living should be so integrated in the individual that his feelings are as rich as his activities and knowledge, and that he can express his feelings in terms of his most highly organized skills and knowledge.

### Development, Not Specific Learnings, Our Major Goal

If we are to provide in our schools the conditions that make for good mental health, we must place greater emphasis upon long-range development. In any healthy child we can see, over a relatively long period of time, major changes taking place in his patterns of behavior. These changes we call developmental changes. They include new feelings about himself and his world; new ways of acting in, and dealing with, this world; and new ideas and beliefs about it. Developmental changes also include the integra-



tion or organization of new and old learnings into new configurations. As the individual grows, there results a more complex unity of the whole person, related to a broader world.

Development may also be conveniently considered in terms of the feeling-doing-thinking dimensions. In the long run, feelings become organized into attitudes. Attitudes become an important index for predicting behavior because they are the emotional base for the ways in which the individual will regard, and hence act toward, objects, conditions, and other persons. They also will determine how he will feel about what he is and what he does.

In the dimension of doing, the individual develops new organizations of skills associated with given tasks and situations, and new and relatively consistent patterns of behavior. The third dimension—that of thinking and knowing—is represented in development by an accumulation of conscious beliefs; essentially, what is the nature of the world and human activity, what is good for one, and what are good ways of achieving desirable ends.

Not one of these dimensions of development is really complete apart from the others. If the individual is to continue to achieve new learnings and adjustments, attitudes must be consistent with patterns of behaving; and knowledge and beliefs must be functionally related to what the individual feels and how he acts. In order to achieve such an integration, and at the same time to function acceptably in the society of which he is a part, the individual must adjust successfully to certain key experiences which arise as a part of development in our society. These we call "developmental tasks."<sup>9</sup>

By and large, our schools are not well organized to foster child development because the essence of healthy development is continuity. Experiences for children in our schools are "choppy," often isolated, even insulated bits of living. Much of what we try to teach is not learned, or else is soon forgotten, because it is so unrelated to the developmental problems the children are facing.

Jay, a junior-high boy, tells in the following excerpts from his teacher's record how he feels about school.

*November 17*

During science class I admonished Jay to get busy on his reading assignment. He countered with, "Miss Jennings, who invented school anyway?" "I don't know, Jay," I answered. "It wasn't *invented* by any one person, I'm sure." "Well, if they was alive now, I'd kill 'em all." "Is school all that bad?" I asked as I sat down in the seat in front of him. "Yes'm," he said, "I just don't like school." "All right, then, you don't like school. Now tell me what you'd like to do." "Just

<sup>9</sup> See Chapters Six and Seven.

stay home." "Why?" "Oh, I just like to stay home." "What do you do at home?" "Play games." "All by yourself?" "No'm. The boy next door'd play with me." "Wouldn't he be at school, though?" "No'm. He don't like school any better than me."

In the meantime, we had acquired a listener, Fenton, who chimed in with, "You know, I thought I'd have a lot of fun at home when I cut my foot that time, but I didn't. I was *bored*." But Jay answered, "Well, I wouldn't be. I always have fun when I stay home." I then asked Jay, "Well, since you don't like school, what is there you don't like about it?" "I don't like sitting in a desk all day." "Now, Jay, you certainly don't spend too much time sitting in *your* desk. You spend only five periods in here with two periods elsewhere and time for lunch and to go to the library and to get a drink. Just what *would* you do in school all day if you had your choice?" "M-m, I guess I'd go to gym all day." "That all?" "No, I'd go to the band and then to assembly programs." "Jay, that sounds like much fun, but what would you do when you were grown up and didn't know any of the things that people expect grown people to know?" He just laughed and another listener-inner piped up with, "Jay will be a hobo, I guess." To that he said with a laugh, "Yes'm, I'm going to be a hobo." I went on to say, "Why, Jay, I thought you told me you wanted to go to agricultural college some day." And he answered, "Well, I guess we could have a little math—'bout twelve or fifteen minutes—I like math all right—but NO ASSIGNMENTS!"

At the end of the school year, Jay failed to pass. The following anecdotes show his reactions to this event.

### *May 23*

Jay had lost his Spanish book which had to be paid for before he could clear his record and check in his lock for his refund. He was quite loud in protesting that how could he pay for a book when they wouldn't give him his money first.

### *May 25*

Jay came about 10:30 and wanted to pay for his book and to get his report cards. I told him that he'd have to pay for the five report cards he'd failed to return and described to him the procedure in the office to get his record clear.

When he returned to my room with his OK'd book card, he came in with "Did I pass, Miss Jennings?" I handed him his cards without comment. From the look on his face he seemed confident that I'd have good news for him. His face fell when he saw the top card and he said, "I see I didn't make it." "No, Jay, I'm afraid you didn't." He made F's in math, science, language arts, and social studies, B in band, and C— in art. I went on to say that though some of his work during the last two weeks was better or improved, it wasn't enough to go to the eighth grade on. I suggested that he might try summer school, and he said he might do that.

About that time his pal, Don, walked in with "Did you pass?" Jay spread out the cards fan-wise and replied, "What do you think, guy?" Jay didn't seem angry or resentful about his not passing. I said I hoped he'd have a good summer and asked if he were packed and ready to go. He said he was all ready. "Are you traveling by yourself or is your mother going, too?" "No'm. My brother-in-law is going." (Previously I'd asked him whom he was visiting and he said his sister.) About then Don said, "We gotta go, guy," and with that they left. Jay turned at the door and half saluted—half waved his hand (full of report cards) at me.

While there is not space here to present more of the anecdotal and other records on Jay, analysis of his records brings forth much interesting data about the boy. Jay has had many strikes against him. From the fourth through the seventh grades, he had been in six different schools. His father had deserted the family; his mother works as a waitress; he lives in a neighborhood with a high delinquency rate. When his complete record is studied from the point of view of long-range development, it emerges that during this past year (the year he failed) he was handling, in a very competent manner, most of the developmental tasks of his stage of growth. He was becoming appropriately independent of adults. He was establishing friendly equalitarian relations with his teachers and other grown-ups. He was finding a place of some status in his classroom group. He was making close friends. His relationships to his mother and to his older brothers were warm, yet realistic. He was giving evidence of emotional maturity in many spheres—in school, at home, with same-sex and opposite-sex peers, and in his outside job situation. The total picture was one of a healthy, robust personality, successfully coping with the major problems that confronted him and making his way in the world. Furthermore, standardized tests showed that in several subjectmatter areas he had gained more than a grade level during the school year.

Jay had accomplished a great deal during the year. The things he had learned, the development that had taken place in him, had been accomplished in spite of the school. In a very real sense, the school—not Jay—had failed.

When our schools really accept responsibility for long-range development, and for helping our children to integrate the feeling-doing-thinking aspects of living, then, and only then, will we have the basic conditions for good mental health. This cannot be accomplished by some of the "patching up" techniques that we have resorted to—adding a specialist or two to the staff, setting aside an hour a week for "guidance," or providing new space in our cumulative records to check "personality traits." Mental health is not a single, separate "area" on which we must now focus attention. It is the reflection of the total, all-around well-being of the individual. It results

when all the various dimensions of living are growing and developing in interrelation.<sup>10</sup>

Thus the conditions of good mental health require that the school create a situation for *all-day-long* where there is a healthy emotional climate—where good human relations between child and child, and between teacher and child can flourish. It will mean providing many more experiences that relate to spontaneous and developmental interests of children. It will mean not only learning to evaluate the total development of the child, but also developing ways of evaluating our own progress toward providing the conditions necessary for good mental health.

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<sup>10</sup> Many of the concepts discussed in this chapter were developed by the writer in collaboration with Mary Grier Jacques, psychologist, U. S. Veterans Administration.





## PART ONE

# Factors Determining Behavior and Development

### INTRODUCTION

THE sciences dealing with human behavior and development have accumulated an impressive array of information about the causes of behavior and the nature of development. This information is presented to us in the scientific literature in the form of generalizations, theories, and principles; but only a little progress has yet been made in applying these principles to real situations. Probably no more important reality-testing situation for our facts and theories could be found than that which exists in our schools, for here we have a group of professional people able to apply scientific knowledge if it is made available to them; and here we have our most important challenge: *the mental health of all our children*.

Many of the findings of the sciences concerned with human beings call into question the validity of much of our current school practice. We have the task of learning to use these scientific facts as tools to analyze and change educational practice. But first we must have a sound working knowledge of those principles and facts. Part I of this book attempts to review and synthesize what seem to be some of the more important generalizations about behavior and development. For some readers these pages will simply be review; for others they may open up new areas of knowledge. We hope Part I may stimulate all to further search for sound information.

The behavior and the development of an individual are the resultants of various forces playing upon him. In this sense behavior is caused, and the development of the person is shaped—shaped into a pattern that is unique. No two people are alike because no two have had exactly the same experiences.



On the other hand, no two human beings are entirely different. We all have a common human biological heritage. Furthermore, the members of any society come to share common beliefs or values, ways of behaving, and ways of relating to others that are considered desirable and proper within that society. Hence persons within any given society tend to become alike in many ways that set them off from people of other societies.

Within American society, which is so complex, there are many different kinds of groups—ethnic, social-class, racial, rural, urban, geographic, religious—and within each group there is communality that marks it as somewhat different from the others. Each group has somewhat different expectations for its children; families within each group train their children in their own variation of the common American pattern—"children bring their families to school" (Chapter Two).

Even within any fairly uniform American community there will be groupings according to age or developmental level. During the last hundred years boys and girls have come to participate less and less in the work-a-day world of adults where once they were so needed; they have come to participate more and more in their own society of children—"children teach each other" (Chapter Three). Probably what they learn from each other is second in importance only to what they learn in the context of their own families.

We have in common the human body. Each of us goes through common patterns of growth and of aging; each of us transforms and expends energy; for each of us our bodily functioning is correlated by the action of the nervous and glandular systems. These "body processes help to determine behavior and development" (Chapter Four).

We share common physiological patterns and processes, but since heredity and experience vary so extensively, "individuality develops" (Chapter Five). Each person becomes an individual; he develops a somewhat different version of what it is he needs or desires, how he believes it best to go about fulfilling his needs, how he perceives himself and the external world, and how he defends himself against threats to his self-esteem. These needs, habitual behaviors, perceptions, and defenses are common threads in personality development, but they are woven into a different pattern for every person.

The forces, then, that play upon the individual originate in three broad areas: the social forces, the expectancies and pressures presented by those individuals or groups with whom he interacts; the biological pressures that make for growth and differentiation; and the desires and needs which arise and become patterned in the individual himself. The first two of these sets of forces determine a sequential array of common "developmental



tasks" (Chapters Six and Seven) that confront each individual as he grows up. His successes and failures in these steps toward maturity will, to a large extent, be determined by his own desire to attack these major life problems, and by the facilities he has developed for dealing with them. The organization of scientific generalizations and principles around the concept of developmental tasks may well become our most important basis for reformulating content and methods of curriculum, and for guidance and therapy of individuals and groups.

In brief, Part I is a review of some of the recent research findings in the broad field of human behavior with emphasis upon the development of the child as a sociological-psychological-biological being.

## CHAPTER TWO

# Children Bring Their Families to School'

ELIZABETH HALL BRADY

MANY children are disturbed and puzzled by their experiences in the school society. This is particularly true of children who come from the so-called minority groups in our society; that is, groups whose cultural patterns differ from the popular or dominant culture. Murphy has estimated that one-third of the children in the United States belong to minority racial and ethnic groups, including Negro, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, and Mexican; to these must be added the large number of children of foreign-born parents.<sup>2</sup> When we consider also those children of native American stock who come from socio-economic groups other than middle-class and who, together with the groups mentioned earlier, constitute about two-thirds of all those in school, it is clear that we are speaking here of the majority of children.<sup>3</sup>

### Why Should We Study the Child's Background?

Why should we be concerned about these children in a volume dealing with mental health? First, because schools follow a pattern of standards, behaviors, and expectations different from those which the majority of children have learned. Each child who comes to public school brings with him a unique view of himself and of the world. He has strong feelings and attitudes; he has definite values and purposes. Because ours is a multi-group society each child differs from every other child in these feelings and attitudes. Each has learned something different from his particular back-

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<sup>1</sup> The illustrations in this chapter are drawn from the files of the Center for Intergroup Education, Department of Education, University of Chicago, formerly Intergroup Education in Cooperating Schools, a project of the American Council on Education. Appreciation is due the teachers in cooperating schools whose studies of children have supplied much of the information here reported.

<sup>2</sup> Murphy, Lois Barclay. "Socialization of the Child." *Readings in Social Psychology*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1947.

<sup>3</sup> Warner, Lloyd; Havighurst, Robert J.; Loeb, Martin B. *Who Shall Be Educated?* New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944.

ground, from his family, his neighborhood, his community, and from the children with whom he plays.

The school thrusts on every child new views of the world and of himself, new feelings, motivations, values, patterns of behavior. It is difficult for any child to learn these new things. Before he has come to feel at ease with the demands and expectations of his family, a new set of learning tasks is set by the new group situation of the school. He tries to learn simultaneously what is expected in these different groups. What secures him approbation in one may draw censure in another; what was unknown in one is taken for granted in the other.

Children from lower income families, from Negro or Spanish-speaking families, or from various ethnic sub-groups, because of the position of their families in a given community, face a more complicated task than other children. They may have difficulty in achieving status, in affiliating with others, in learning everyday skills, in retaining their own group membership while trying to obtain rewards and opportunities available only if they give up that membership. It is difficult for them to escape the stereotypes assigned them by others.

Moreover, membership in some groups means learning values and behaviors which are stringent and demanding. Middle-class parents expect their children to achieve high marks in school, to win in competitive situations, to be independent of others. We know that middle-class children as infants are given stricter training than lower-class children in such matters as toilet training and food habits. Other groups under other conditions set special demands. Jewish middle-class parents in a particular neighborhood may put much stress on high achievement in school, although this is not true of all Jewish parents. Only as we become aware of such expectations and pressures can we use the school situation effectively to help children meet and handle them, and avoid piling more demands on children already overburdened.

For these reasons, any school program concerned with fostering mental health must contend with the tremendous variations in children's backgrounds, and consequently with the differences in their values and purposes. Although children who attend public schools have learned widely different social behaviors and purposes, the organization and content of the typical school proceed on the assumption that all children have learned the same ways of behaving.

Even when we have assumed in general that social backgrounds make a difference, we have not sufficiently identified those differences which should be taken into account in school programs. We still continue to be unrealistic in what we expect of children and in what we present to them, or we proceed on the basis of stereotypes. Identifying group characteristics

has often led to the error of assigning to all children from a given background, behaviors and purposes which many of them and their parents do not, in fact, hold. The information that a child comes from a home broken by death, desertion, or divorce leads to the conclusion that that child is "insecure" and "emotionally deprived." Yet we have seen children from such homes who have emotionally satisfying experiences, while other children from unbroken and so-called "good" homes do not. Or it is taken for granted that all children of lower-class status are lacking in ambition and do not value middle-class patterns of dress, language, and behavior.

A group of teachers with evidence before them of how one kindergarten child dressed, acted toward other children, and spoke to adults, concluded that he came from a middle-class family and constructed a whole picture of that family pattern. They were dismayed and reluctant to believe the information later given them that he came from a low income Spanish-speaking home. This child, like many others, has a parent who wishes him to move upward socially and is shrewdly providing him with the means of such mobility, including urging him to "do everything just like the teacher says and does."

In another city, teachers attribute to all parents who are well-to-do and upper middle-class in status, superficial social ambitions, undue emphasis on grades, and rigid expectations of children. Parent interviews revealed that several parents of children in a given grade did not subscribe to the aspirations attributed to them.

We must keep in mind that there are as wide variations among children from a given group as between groups, and that nothing that has been observed to be true in general of a group can be taken to apply equally to all members of that group. However comprehensive the information obtained on patterns of living of sub-groups in our society, each teacher herself must gather information, study the significance of her information in the lives of the children she teaches, and be watchful for the ways in which a child's particular social background has affected his social learning.

### **How Do Children's Social Learnings Differ?**

First we will consider those variations which are not a result of membership in different cultural groups, but which grow out of variations of children's experience in the family. We can then consider what variations seem related to group membership. The illustrations in this section are drawn from written and oral statements of children themselves. The variations they reveal are apparent also through observation.

#### **There Are Differences from Family to Family**

The family is the initial socializing context. Here each child learns to behave, to feel, to think in the ways of that family group. Because he de-

depends on others for food and care, for love and approval, for support and affiliation, the child learns to behave as those upon whom he depends wish him to behave. He takes on the values he sees them subscribing to. We know that such learning, however rewarding, is difficult for the child; he must give up present satisfactions for others less promising. But he does give them up; he does take on a pattern of his own, different from those of other children.

Children learn different ways of expressing their feelings. In one third grade, children described "what I do when I get mad," in these diverse ways:

I go sit on the back step and cry.

I forget something I'm supposed to get at the store, but I don't really forget. I just want to make mother mad and it does.

I talk back until my mother says, "shut up." Then she don't do nothing else less she slaps me. If she slaps me, I kick her. Then she makes me go to bed.

I don't let my brother play and I hit him if he tells.

I draw pictures and press on the crayons so hard they break, but then I'm sorry because I don't have no crayons.

All these children come from families of relatively the same socio-economic status; all live in the same neighborhood. Yet in the first seven

*Children bring varied nationality, racial, and ethnic backgrounds to school.*

*Official United Nations Photo*



or eight years of life their methods of expressing feelings have been patterned in different ways. As the statements show, their awareness of how they feel and their resulting behavior vary widely.

Children learn different ways of behaving toward other people, and they have different concepts of the quality of relations they wish to establish with others. In an eighth grade, boys and girls told what they do when they want something from their parents which they know their families can't afford:

I act awful good for a long time without mentioning what I want and then after a long while I ask for it.

I point out to my mother how terribly expensive all the coats are this season and we talk about how awful it is. Pretty soon when I ask for the one I want it doesn't seem like so much.

I just don't talk about it and I figure out some way to get it myself.

I pout and make things so unpleasant that eventually they give it to me.

I paste up pictures all over my room of the thing I want and sometimes they take the hint.

In a first grade, one child repeatedly protested against cooperative games, saying, "You are supposed to see who can beat. That's what my Daddy says. See who can beat. He's the best one." Other children in the same room quite happily entered into activities where no child would emerge as winner.

Children have learned different ways of responding to things that happen to them. Fifth and sixth graders, commenting on "what I do when someone makes fun of me," said:

Once I wore my sister's shoes to school and all the boys made fun of me. I got all red in the face and was I boiled up. I always told the teacher on kids when they do something wrong and they make fun of me because I tell.

When people poke fun of other people it does not feel good. I have been poked fun of sometimes. This fall when I wore my heavy coat, some of the boys laughed at me, and I laughed with them. The best way to make them stop is to ignore them. But I don't feel very good when they do it either.

When someone makes fun of me, I get very mad and wonder what's wrong.

I feel terrible. I feel like saying, "My mother's got more sense in making me wear long stockings." I feel like crying.

Equally great variations appear when children tell what they do when other criticize them, when they feel left out, or when they are misunderstood by others.

Children have learned different concepts of what constitutes success and achievement. In one family the children have been taught to "do it yourself and don't depend on anyone else," while in another they have learned that more can be accomplished when people do things together. School experiences vary in the same ways; children are told in one grade, "You are responsible for yourself only and to yourself only," while in the next they are told to "be a good group member." Some children have learned soon after entering school that getting good grades and winning adult approval are the best measures of success, while others have come to value above all else the approval of others in their gang.

Children from families in the same social group have had to meet very different parental expectations and have developed different concepts of their own competence to live up to those expectations. The following comments are from sixth graders:

They always seem to be expecting me to be a smart person and get all A's or something like that. They also expect me to be able to do everything. My dad tries to show me how to do schoolwork that is all different. When I don't understand he gets mad at me. I just do my best and that's all I can do. It makes me feel like a little kid that doesn't know anything at all.

People are always telling me to hurry, hurry, and hurry, and having to have each thing in at a certain time. I cannot do anything about it very well. Personally I do not like it.

At home no one wants me to do more than I should. I almost always do what's expected of me. At school some of the time I think that I'm given too much work. Then I hurry through it because I think I won't get done. I feel good when I'm the first one done with it. But on my report card I get a check just because I'm first one done; I don't think that's right.

Other people always expect me to do the things that I'm supposed to do. Some people expect me to be a perfect little angel. Other people (Mother) expect me to empty the garbage and clean up the sink and, though I do it, I hate the job. The reason I don't like to empty the garbage and clean up the sink is because I hate the slimy feel. Otherwise I don't mind too much what other people expect of me.

Other people always seem to be piling things on me. For instance, someone tells me to straighten up my room. Then just as soon as I get in my room my mother tells me to practice my French horn. I do the one I like best first, and then I do the other one. I feel that people are just giving me too much to do.

Interestingly enough, the above statements and many more like them came from children in a classroom where the teacher had previously concluded that too little was expected of children.

The ways in which children's social learnings vary regardless of group membership are innumerable. A child learns to be aggressive or submissive;



to be competitive or cooperative; to expect acceptance and approval from adults, or criticism and rejection; that to be "good" is to keep quiet and comply, or to act independent and resourceful; to respond to rebuffs with hostility, or to accept them easily; to express verbally or physically what he feels, or to keep feelings concealed. He learns to expect certain things of parents and other adults and himself; to value certain roles and behaviors and reject others; to aspire to certain goals and to reject others. Each of these represents a more or less adequate technique of handling the situations he encounters.

### **There Are Differences Between Cultural Sub-Groups**

We have been saying thus far that children come to behave differently because their family contexts have all been unique. There are also traceable threads among whole groups of families. A group of children may learn to respond in the same ways because they have all been repeatedly exposed to the same experiences. They may develop similar attitudes and acquire similar concepts because they have been instructed in the same ways. They may learn a particular set of mores fostered by the group in which they grew up.

There will be no attempt in this section to isolate the particular influences on children's social learning which stem from membership in a given sub-group. Many factors must always be taken into account, not merely the single item of group membership. A Negro child from a middle-class home in a northern community will have learned differently from a Negro child in a lower-class home in a southern segregated city; what the first child learns may in many respects be similar to what a white child of the same status in his city has learned. We cannot say that all Negro children, or all Spanish-speaking children, or all Jewish children, or all children from middle-class families will develop certain specific values. We can only say that a combination of circumstances will result in most children in a given group sharing in certain learnings.

Some children have fewer chances than others to learn certain types of behavior. Many children from low-income homes do not have, for example, the opportunities of middle-class children to learn the niceties of language, to learn how to use toilet facilities, or to learn what table manners are approved. Many middle-class children, on the other hand, have less opportunity than lower-class children to organize their own play activities, to choose their own associates, to make decisions for themselves.

The following descriptions show some contrasts in behaviors, feelings, and purposes which appear to be true for children whose group memberships vary. They have been selected because they are the kinds of differences which are ever-present and which frequently lead to misunderstanding.



We have said that children learn to express feelings differently. In a large group of Negro high-school students living in a segregated community many showed fear of "getting mad and losing my temper." They were afraid of feeling anger, but still more fearful of exhibiting it; they felt that to do so would make them vulnerable to social criticism, of which they already had more than their share. In another city, fifth-grade children who came from an unusually strict fundamentalist religious background exhibited a tendency to take out hostility on themselves when they got mad, rather than to direct it toward others. They expressed feelings of guilt and personal inadequacy over becoming angry.

In each socio-economic group different ways of expressing emotions are accepted. Lower-class families, for example, often show affection by cheerful nagging, pommeling, and loud verbal attack. These methods would shock many middle-class people who think of kissing and approval-giving as ways of demonstrating affection.

In school these differences are not provided for; expression of feelings is apt to be repressed entirely, or given only a few approved outlets. Thus children who have had to suppress emotions, as in the first two illustrations, receive no help in understanding their own reactions. Children who have learned to express feelings directly and openly are likely to be punished, particularly for showing anger, jealousy, dislike, and resentment. Children who have learned to re-direct their hostilities into competitiveness—those who work to get the best grades, those who try to outdo others in being obliging and accommodating, those who seem compelled to take over status and leadership positions—are rewarded for doing these things, regardless of the ultimate wisdom of rewarding such behavior.

Experience in different social groups creates different goals and different ways of looking at things. Responses completing the phrase, "If I had one hundred dollars," show clear differences in the ability to plan for long-range consequences. In certain schools, children almost without exception indicated that they would save half or more of the money for "my college education," or some similar purpose. Children in other schools listed many things they would buy at once, including operations for parents and clothes and toys for themselves. The former are upper middle-class children. Their emphasis on saving proceeds from a calm confidence that money put in the bank will be there to spend years later; it is not evidence of cautiousness or frugality arising from need. The latter group have no such assurances; they need to make sure of getting *now* the benefits of any money or good fortune which comes to hand. Their experience has been that you can't count on the future.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> For further discussion of this point see Davis, Allison. *Social-Class Influences Upon Learning*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1948.

School practice tends to be designed for children like the former. Training in foreseeing consequences is regarded as an important educational function, and rewards and motivations are set up which assume the capacity of children to behave now in accord with future goals. For children in whose lives there is no guarantee of anything beyond the present, such motivations are unreal.

All children in a given group may learn to respond in the same ways in situations of stress. High-school students, both in a segregated Negro community and in a low-income occupational school, were observed. They characteristically responded in two ways to rebuffs received in applying for jobs or in making purchases in stores: They directly attacked the other person, a personnel manager or salesclerk, blaming him or calling him prejudiced; or they completely withdrew from the situation. Either alternative meant sacrifice of their objective—the job or the dress—and considerable loss of self-esteem. These children had met so many rebuffs that their interpretations of situations and their ways of handling them were conditioned ahead of time. They often saw rejection where it did not actually exist.

Another illustration of patterning of reaction is supplied by children in an upper middle-class junior high school who were used to many rules and much adult supervision. They had relatively few opportunities to organize their own lives or to work out relations with others. When frictions arose or when rules were broken, these children had only one procedure for handling the situation. They called on the teacher to settle things, or they invoked a rule. They were particularly eager to have punishments administered to offenders. They did not understand how situations could be worked out by any means other than authority.

Most schools reinforce dependence on rules, external regulation, and code behaviors. Children reared in such a pattern fall in with the regulations, but in doing so may have to carry an uncomfortable burden of conformity. Children who are not used to conforming, who are unfamiliar with the behaviors to which the rules apply, or who do not understand the rationale behind the code are puzzled and annoyed. Their feeling was well expressed by a kindergartner who had been punished for being bad, for banging on the piano, and being noisy, while others rested. He was excluded from the group, publicly admonished, and told he would remain excluded until he "learned to be good." He turned much later to a visitor and wistfully asked, "What is 'be good'?"

In different groups, children learn to regard themselves differently. Their experiences have resulted in different concepts of what a person should be like. For example, in answer to the question, "What do I like about myself?" Negro children frequently mentioned their own appearance, their skin

color, and straightness of hair; middle-class children mentioned having "nice manners" and "doing the best I can." Such evidence helps reveal what specific concepts of self children have acquired and what social expectations they have been subject to.

Such terms as "cooperation," "responsibility," "being a good group member," "playing fair," and "being a good sport," mean vastly different things to children from different neighborhoods. When these differences in meaning are ignored, some children are likely to receive frequent punishment or exclusion, and all children are being equipped to misunderstand others. What constitutes "stealing" and dishonesty is different in different settings. Children in a well-to-do community, for example, were extremely hard on boys who climbed a fence to get into a ball game. These children righteously pointed out that the boys should have earned the money. They themselves had been successful in earning large sums for odd jobs and they could not conceive of a community in which earning money is not easy. They labeled children who failed to earn money dishonest and lazy.

School programs are based on the assumption that certain values are common American values. Getting ahead on the job, showing individual initiative, making the most of oneself, climbing the social scale, are examples. In the United States education has long been the means to social mobility. Schools have felt justified in fostering motivations and organizing programs in terms of those values. They have lost sight of the fact that many children are prevented from achieving higher social status because of their membership in stigmatized groups and because opportunities are narrowing. These children do not intend to, or cannot, climb the social ladder. Thus not only the everyday expectations of school, but also the larger purposes by which the school is patterned, are inconsistent with the purposes of the children who attend. Schools have yet to reassess critically the consequences of giving training and promoting values which children cannot hope to use and enjoy.

### What Should We Know About the Child?

Even when we know what part of town children come from, or what racial or nationality group they belong to, we may not have the information we need. It is exceedingly important that we obtain the answers to questions like these concerning a given child:

Has he had a chance to learn what the school takes for granted—especially language, manners, ways of playing with others, obeying rules, concepts like "cooperation"? If not, what has he learned in these and related areas?

What particular expectations and pressures has he had to meet thus far, particularly in his family and play group? To what special pressures has membership in a minority group subjected him? What values has he taken on—what does he consider "success"? What kind of a self does he value? What does he expect of others? What concepts has he acquired about everyday realities—what a family is, or what a community is?

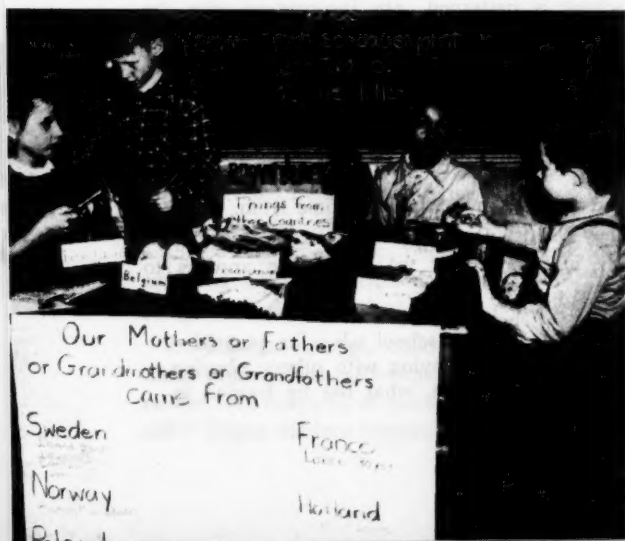
What ways of expressing feelings has he developed? How does he feel about the things which happen to him?

How has he learned to relate himself to others? What does he expect in his relations with others?

### How Do Children from Different Backgrounds Fare in School?

Children who come from lower-class backgrounds and those who come from various racial and ethnic minorities constitute, as we have already said, the majority of school children. Having to grapple with so many differences between home and school in cultural patterns and expectations, they tend to be deprived in three major ways. First, they are made to feel in school that they and their own backgrounds are not adequate and "all right." Second, they are limited in their chances to affiliate with others and to feel they "belong," because they are cut off from many opportunities to participate in the social life of the school. Finally, they are limited in their chances to learn what the popular culture supports and approves.

At the time children enter school they are just becoming aware of what they and their families are like and how they differ from others. Consciousness of difference brought on by other children's comments or by the child's own observation causes him anxiety. Where deviation is stressed as bad and particular patterns criticized, directly or by implication, the



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anxiety and concern are deepened. A first-grade teacher reported that the children in her room are punished for being smarty or sissy if they say "yes, ma'am" or "please" at home; in school they are criticized if they do not speak in this way. She recognized that what is told them at school about family life is at odds with family life as they know it. Instead of the unbroken small family with the white collar job and the placid home life described in the first-grade readers, these children know families where one or the other parent is gone, where they live in close quarters, where parents often fight, where there is often too little money.

A child in another school during "telling time" described how her mother and father had fought; her mother had taken her downtown to dinner, and they had "laughed at my father because he was mad." The teacher cut her off with "You mustn't tell that now. We are telling happy things and that isn't a happy thing." For that first grader whether it was happy or not mattered little. It was an event which had absorbed her feelings and thoughts; she needed a chance to look at it and understand it. She must have begun to wonder what was wrong with her and her family. Older children encounter the same discrepancies between their feelings and experience and what the school promotes.

When teachers are unaware what children's lives are like, they may inadvertently say things which undermine children's feelings of adequacy and foster feelings of guilt and anxiety. In a fifth grade, a teacher described to the children at some length the death of her mother, her own sorrow and great unhappiness. She went on to say that, fortunately, she had no regrets over the way she had ever treated her mother, that she had never been cross or unkind to her, and she hoped that these children could say the same. This was said to children who came from homes where mothers work, where there are many children and little time or attention for each other, where there is much tension, bickering, and many misunderstandings between adults and children. The teacher reported to a visitor that she knew her comments had gone to the heart, because "they were all crying when I finished."

Some children reject what the school offers because the social setting outside school has been more rewarding than that in school. They leave school early; or, if they remain, they are the "sitters" whom the school does not touch. Other children give up the behaviors and values promoted by the group from which they come in order to win the approval and rewards offered by the school. This desertion can have serious personal and social consequences. The school fosters their escape but fails to help them identify and handle the emotional problems which result.

One eighth-grade girl in a lower-class school, predominantly Negro, learned to dress, speak, act, and behave in all the ways one of her

teachers approved. She was quiet, passive, diligent. None of her classmates included her in their activities, and many actively rejected her. Her teacher commented with regard to this that she "didn't care if Jane isn't liked. It doesn't matter. She is *just* the way a girl ought to be." Yet it seems doubtful that Jane can grow up successfully by behaving in ways which deny her acceptance from her age-mates, and which mean rejecting the accepted values and behaviors of her community.

The bases for rewards in school reflect middle-class values and purposes. They are bestowed for performance of a limited range of roles far too narrow to accommodate the personality variations of children. Thus many children are denied the chance to succeed on their own terms; they can get approval only by becoming something else. "Good manners," high marks, compliance with adult regulation are all rewarded by approval and by opportunities to hold certain positions, to participate in certain activities, and, in short, to have more chances to learn and be rewarded for the same behaviors all over again. A great many children who begin school at a disadvantage in not having learned expected behaviors or in not being motivated toward school goals are permanently cut off, since the circular nature of rewards and opportunities merely increases advantage for those who already have it and excludes those who do not.

In most schools, academic and other selective criteria govern membership in activities. The practices in leadership selection narrow the number of children holding positions, since there is a tendency to reappoint or re-elect those who have already held such positions. In high schools where participation was studied, it was found that rarely are more than 20 percent of all students actively involved in clubs, student government, and similar activities. Those who do participate in one activity, participate in many, both in and out of school. Those who do not participate tend to come from those sub-groups in the community which are already out of touch with each other and with the active groups. The structure of the school society corresponds closely to the structure of the community.

As they find their own backgrounds disapproved and themselves cut off from participation, children from ethnic and economic sub-groups have two strikes against them in learning new ways to get along in the school and in the larger society.

### What Are the Implications?

To a large number of children, then, the following things happen, all of them inimical to mental health: The child finds himself in a situation where he cannot express himself emotionally as he learned to do; he is confronted by discrepancies in values, behaviors, and purposes but is not helped to explore these discrepancies; he does not understand what is happening



to himself and others—why certain behavior is rewarded and other behavior is punished; he finds himself and his background ignored and devalued, even criticized and derided; he is limited in opportunities to affiliate with others and to feel he belongs; he increasingly feels less adequate.

That this happens to so many children implies several things for school programs. First, we need to assess at what points we can effectively connect with children's present experiences and emotional orientations. We need to take into account the processes of socialization through which children have already gone before they come to school. This will mean reconsidering the content which is at present unrealistic in terms of children's lives. It will mean recognizing that many things now outlawed as "too personal" or undesirable are the very content through which children can understand and deal with the relationships of their daily lives—their own feelings, the way they get along with others, the things that puzzle and worry them. It means helping children look at alternative ways of handling situations, not moralizing about the ways they now practice.

Schools will have to reconsider the motivations they capitalize on and consider valid. At present, they often ignore the real motivations of children, setting in their place objectives which cannot be rewarding for some children and should not be rewarding for others.

Finally, the atmosphere created for living and learning needs to be re-examined. At present, the atmosphere in many classrooms is far from conducive to mental health. It is repressive; it stresses individual achievement and competition; it rewards a limited range of roles and behaviors. For any child this is unfavorable; for children from minority groups such an atmosphere is particularly harsh and penalizing.

Fortunately, more and more teachers are recognizing the effects of social backgrounds in assessing children's needs and in planning programs based on those needs.<sup>5</sup> While school people can look to social anthropologists for more information and more extensive studies on sub-groups in our society, they are themselves in the best position to learn and understand how the social backgrounds of the children they teach have promoted differences in those children's behaviors and purposes.

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<sup>5</sup> For some illustrations of program, see *Curriculum in Intergroup Relations. Case Studies in Secondary Schools*. Prepared by the staff of the Center for Intergroup Education, University of Chicago. Washington: American Council on Education, 1949. Case studies of elementary schools will be published soon.

## CHAPTER THREE

# Children Teach Each Other

DOUGLAS M. MORE

**L**EARNING to live with other people is a major life task. Winning in a game of marbles or losing a footrace may have much greater effect on the development of a particular child's personality than anything he learns in a schoolroom that same day. It conceivably may have more effect than anything he learns in a week, a month, or a year. It could mean to the child that he has taken a positive step toward social maturity at a critical period in his developmental progress. Losing out in the complex web of social interactions, similarly, might mean that he has gotten out of touch with the feelings, inter-personal relations, and eventual successes in the life of his entire age-group.

Learning to live and interact with others is particularly important in school years when it can take many different directions. It is then that the child is malleable and can be redirected into constructive paths. It is then that false directions may subtly alter the entire path of later life.

No amount of solitary study can give a person the necessary feelings about how he should or how he may act with other people. As is often said, "The test is in the doing!" Thus, the test of gentlemanliness, of honor and honesty, of truth and loyalty, is that a person reacts appropriately in spontaneously arising social situations. This is not a simple matter of learning "good" rules of conduct. It is also a problem of learning when and how one must strike back, when and how to be aggressive or hostile, acceptant or passive. The growth of self-integrity and self-esteem arises partly from the give and take of play situations with one's peers during formative years, and from work and recreation with friends and acquaintances in later life.

### Social Learning in the Peer Group

Viewed in this way, social learning becomes a series of personal interactions in small, face-to-face groups. We could list each such group in which the



child takes part in a day—parents, brothers and sisters, the small knot of friends with whom he walks to school, and groups that form in the classroom and on the playground after school. It is convenient to separate these various groups into two types—the world controlled primarily by adults and the world controlled primarily by children.

It is the children's world with which we are concerned. Within this children's world we may distinguish the *peer group*, made up of one's own age-mates, and perhaps those other children with whom one interacts who are within a year or two of one's own age. It is within this particular segment of society that the growing child finds the friendship pairs, the small gangs, cliques, and clubs that occupy him. These are the people who feel as he feels, and as no adult can feel. They share with him to a large extent his aspirations and his outlook on persons older and younger. They form the matrix in which social learning can take place on equalitarian terms, in which give and take can be fostered without the further complication of having to deal with superiors (adults) or with inferiors (younger children). Whenever we try to understand the motivations for a child's actions we must take into account the influence of his peer group as well as the influences of his family, church, school, and community.

In succeeding sections we will try to demonstrate some of the social learnings that take place in this context. One method of doing this will be to analyze verbatim accounts of what goes on in peer group interactions, showing how social learning in the peer group can influence development of the child's personality, how the successes or failures he encounters in that realm may impinge on the activities he carries on in other milieux.

### The Peer Group Emerges

Nearly every teacher at the primary level can testify to a definite difference between first- and second-grade children in their social relationships. This is not simply a difference of a year in chronological age, or an increase in mental powers. First-grade children are largely adult-oriented. Each child varies in the way in which he relates to the teacher; but by and large, his relations to the teacher take precedence over his relations to the other children.

By the end of the second grade, we usually observe the beginnings of the phenomenon which becomes more and more characteristic at successive ages—that the child's relations to other children take precedence over his relations to the teacher. The peer group is beginning to become real and meaningful.

A study of friendships in a first-grade group shows very loose social organization. Friendship pairs arise and persist for a short while, and then

die out. Almost nothing exists in the way of integrated cliques of three or four children, all of whom choose each other as best friends. By the middle of the second grade, the class begins to exhibit a different atmosphere. There may be friendship groups which persist for several months or longer.

The observations of a teacher who had the same group of pupils through first and second grades will serve to illustrate the point. At the beginning of the second half of the second grade she wrote:

*February 26*

The friendships in my room are scattered; there are four little cliques, I think, though they are loosely constructed. Two boys were chosen by as many as three friends. Pete and Don each had three.

This teacher's interests had been focused on Don, whom she had selected early in the school year for a case study. Nonetheless, her observations on the social structure of the class are most interesting. The fact that four even loosely constructed cliques existed in a single classroom is evidence of much more complicated grouping and mutual interaction than can be found in the usual *first* grade.

If we look at Don as he appeared to the teacher in the first year of school, and if we observe his behavior in the second grade, we can judge the crucial importance of the peer group at this stage of development. At the end of the first grade, he was described as follows:

Don has been an interesting child to me ever since he started in my group last year. He seemed a baby compared to the others in the room. He was a little bit sissy. He was constantly worrying about something. During these periods of worry, he usually cried.

Don has never been a disciplinary problem. He always has seemed eager to please me and is embarrassed if I correct him. He glances at the children near-by to see if they have noticed.

The following observations, made during Don's second year, are revealing of the changes that are occurring in Don's relationships:

*November 20*

I was talking to Don's mother today. . . . She asked me about two little boys who are his friends. James, she says, walks home with Don every day and sometimes they play on the way home. Too, he is beginning to annoy the family with his frequent telephone calls. She says James calls several times a day, once at 7:30 in the morning, and he and Don have "very silly conversations."

Once recently, when James called, the grandmother asked him what he and Don did on the way home the day before to make them so late. James didn't give any information, and she called Don to the phone. Immediately he asked James, "Did you tell my grandmother what we did on the way home?" And when James said he hadn't, Don said, "I'm sure glad you didn't. I can *depend* on you."

*December 18*

Today I heard a scuffling in the cloakroom, and upon investigation, I found Don and Teddy having a big time wrestling on the floor. I scolded them, trying to make them realize that we had too much to do, and had no time for play. Don looked quite shocked and embarrassed.

*January 29*

Yesterday Don brought a little wooden gun to school. All day he enjoyed it and the importance it gave him with the other boys. During work period some of the boys began working on a play. They had much fun in the cloakroom and when they gave the play, it was nothing but the "shoot 'em up" game of "cops and robbers," with much chasing, shooting, falling, coming to life, and starting all over again. Don took a very enthusiastic part in it, and when he went home he told his mother he'd had more fun than he'd ever had at school before. I believe he felt that he belonged in the group that had the play.

*February 23*

I took a poll of room friendships. . . .

When I asked Don about his best friend, he immediately named both Gerald and Teddy. He insisted that he liked them both the same. Although he named Gerald first, he added Teddy's name every time. Don was the only child in the room who questioned my reason for doing it. "What's the idea of all this?" he asked. I told him it would help me if I could know with whom he liked best to play and work.

*February 28*

Lately it seems to me that Don tries to see how many things he can do to annoy me. He chatters, he taps his pencil, he mumbles, he invariably is playing with something when I want him to listen. There must be some reason for it; he used to be so "mousey-quiet" all the time. I try not to fuss too much about it, because I've seen some sly grins exchanged with Teddy when I asked him to quit making some noise. I wonder if this may not be his effort at finding his place in the group—at becoming one of the boys.

*April 12*

Today Bill and Teddy, who sit at the same table now, chattered a lot. Finally I said, "I don't know what I'm going to do if you boys don't stop talking so much." Soon Don came to me with a suggestion. He said, "Miss Bricketts, Teddy's got a gang—and I'm in it—and Bill's in it, too, and if you'd put Teddy at another table where there aren't any of his gang, I think he'd stop talking."

These anecdotes reveal the development of the clique to which Don belonged, and the degree to which he learned to identify himself with his "gang." They illustrate the emergence of the peer group as a real influence in the life of the child, and how the peer group affects the child's relations to adults.

The anecdote reported on November 20, when James and Don were in league against Don's grandmother, illustrates how children gradually begin to develop loyalties toward each other and how they form cliques which exclude adults.

The anecdotes of December 18 and January 29, when Don and his friends are engaged in the strictly "male" activities of wrestling, shooting, and scuffling, illustrate how the activities approved by the peer group may conflict with adult standards. In the first case, this conflict resulted in Don's being "shocked and embarrassed." In the second incident, Don's elation at being accepted into the boys' world gave him "more fun than he'd ever had at school before"—even in the face of what we might guess was the teacher's disapproval.

On February 28, Don's "sly grins exchanged with Teddy" are further evidences of the peer group's exclusion of adults and adult values. In Don's comments on April 12, we see the direct verbal acknowledgment that the clique is an operating reality in the lives of these boys—a reality which has a direct influence upon the school situation.

Many a teacher might find solace in the fact that when children of this age seem to "gang up on her," they are giving evidence of normal development. She has not necessarily failed them. Their preoccupations have shifted, and they are busy with an important developmental task—that of establishing their own children's world.

A particularly revealing observation of the interplay of feelings and social action in this children's world was recorded at a later time.

### *May 9*

Bobbie has been in our school about a month. He's spoiled, he tattles, he tells stories, he fusses, and in many other ways makes himself unpopular with the children and me. Recently I've noticed that Teddy and Don are jealous of him.

Yesterday afternoon during recess, I noticed that Don wasn't playing with his gang as usual. I asked him where Teddy was, and his reply was, "Oh, he's playing with that skunk, Bobbie!" This morning when I came to the room, both Don and Teddy showed signs of a fight. Teddy's eyes were full of tears; Don had been crying, his face was red, and he was all out of breath.

When I asked him to tell me about it, he just gasped and puffed and pretended to be so breathless that he couldn't talk. I think the real reason was that he didn't want to talk about it in front of the other children. So just as soon as they settled down, I took Teddy and Don to the health room. There I learned that Don had arrived at school earlier than Teddy and had started talking with Bobbie. When Teddy came and found them together he first hit Bobbie, but it was soon Don and he who were fighting. They each said they didn't like to see the other one play with Bobbie.



*Los Angeles County Schools*

*The peer group meets the child's need for association with social equals.*

I asked Teddy if Don had hurt him any, and he pulled a tooth out of his pocket. He grinned and said that it was already loose, though. Teddy and Don were usually such good pals that it amused me that Bobbie, the trouble-maker, could incite such a vigorous fight between them.

We talked about Bobbie and they decided that they'd not play with him any more unless he quit causing trouble. When Don and Teddy left the room, they were bosom pals again and had their arms around each other.

In analyzing this event we notice at once the teacher's phrase, "... wasn't playing with his gang as usual." It is clear that "Don's gang" had been a stable landmark in the social scene of this particular second-grade class for at least a number of months. Other things in the boys' behavior show some of the purposes their gang friendship had served. Don made special efforts to keep from telling on his friend, and it was only after the teacher had taken both boys off to a separate room that she secured information about their fight.

It is in just such ways as these that the rudiments of loyalty to one's own group are instilled. Such beginnings permit the development through succeeding stages of childhood and adolescence into loyalties shown by adult citizens to such groups as Rotary Clubs, political parties, societies formed for the promulgation of some civic process, and the like.

Another factor which deserves mention in the foregoing example is the role of Bobbie. Many of us are familiar with this type of person. In spite of the negative qualities the teacher has listed, he must have had some sort of charm, some attraction for the two boys mentioned. His relation to both of them was of a very possessive nature, almost seductive in the sense of leading them into destructive action. We notice the intensive jealousy of the two boys over each other's attentions to this newcomer.

We can only conjecture, on the basis of these and other data in this case study, what might have been the motivations underlying Bobbie's behavior. His inner needs for companionship undoubtedly led him to his characteristic way of behaving. But, we might predict that the patterns of social behavior he is now using may persist in later years. More often than not, the patterns of social behavior developed in the early years of life—particularly those behaviors relative to one's peers—become stabilized and consistent. Unless the course of social events becomes markedly different for Bobbie in successive years, it is not improbable that we might find him two decades later still exerting charm and attraction to bind people to him. And, in almost unaccountable fashion, wherever he goes and with whatever group he interacts, the established social and emotional relationships will tend to become disorganized by his presence. It is not inappropriate to name him here at the second grade as an emotional and social disrupter, and it is not unlikely that he will continue to function in this role until such time as he is helped to establish a different pattern of dealing with his peers.

We might digress a moment to inquire just how much effect the teacher had on changing the course of Don's and Teddy's relations to Bobbie. It well may be that her intervention was instrumental in re-establishing Ted's and Don's amicable relations on May ninth, but it is doubtful if her exhortation not to play with Bobbie had any great bearing on the subsequent course of events. Nearly two weeks later the following episode was observed:

#### *May 21*

This morning at the beginning of recess I noticed that Don was standing in the door of the cloakroom, motioning to Teddy, coaxing him to come into the cloakroom with him. Just as I noticed this motioning, I realized that I'd just heard him say, "Come on, Teddy, and I'll give you a cookie." I looked around at Teddy and found that he was with Bobbie again. He seemed to be torn between two desires—to look at whatever Bobbie was showing him, and to follow Don and



get the cookie. It seemed rather interesting to me that Don realized that Teddy was so interested in what Bobbie was showing that he would have to offer him some incentive to come—the cookie. Teddy's natural liking for Don and the cookie won out, however; he left Bobbie and followed Don into the cloakroom.

It is clear that Bobbie's ability to attract Ted is still a matter of concern to Don. Don is having to resort to fairly obvious "devices" in order to retain Ted's loyalty. Don and Ted, and for that matter the entire class, had evidently been working through their feelings about Bob, as shown by a second poll of class friendships.

### *May 22*

I took a poll of the class friendships again today. Don's choice remained the same as in February. Teddy is his very best friend, and Gerald is his second-best friend. In the earlier poll, however, he wouldn't admit that he liked one better than the other.

Bobbie was not chosen either as a first- or second-choice friend by any child in the room.

This illustrates how the class as a whole had reacted to Bob. It also shows how the friendship between Don, Ted, and Gerald had persisted. This clique situation has provided a continuing set of real life experiences for each of its members. Each had been able to learn the give and take of social action on an equalitarian basis, in a way that no amount of interacting with adults could have provided. They had provided each other with physical and spiritual support in competition with other gangs, and they had gone through the emotionally trying experience of adjusting to a disrupting intruder.

It certainly would be absurd to claim that Don's experiences within his peer group brought about all the changes that took place in his second year in school. Sound medical care resulted in better health; changes in an unfortunate home situation probably helped to promote better emotional reactions; the friendly and supportive attitude of his teacher gave him added strength. But, in addition, his peer group provided positive factors without which all these other circumstances could easily have been of no avail. The very fact that Don was able to engage Ted in a fight, as was illustrated in the scene with Bobbie, was a positive element in his social growth, however trying and disrupting it may have been for the teacher.

Only a short time before that incident the teacher had noticed another difficulty between Ted and Don. At that time her notes read:

I guess he had the urge to strike at somebody and Teddy was the most available and most near his size. He didn't hurt Teddy, though; he just held him by the collar, gritting his teeth and "looking daggers" at him. *This was as near as I've ever seen Don come to fighting.* I believe he is *developing* several "little boy" characteristics, however. He

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plays better with some of the boys during recess, and I believe he is finding his place in the group for the first time.

Whether we agree with this last opinion or not, it is definitely true that Don had worked through an important developmental task when finally he was able to stand up and fight to maintain his social relationships. The social disruption faced by Don is not unlike the disruption that often occurs in love or marriage relations. As many a marriage counselor will attest, a considerable number of marriages are broken simply because one or both of the partners have never learned how to fight for the maintenance of a stable relationship in the face of external disrupting influences. It is possible that such persons have never gone through the formative experience that Don had. The ability to stand up firmly for the integrity of oneself and others cannot be gained without having experienced some such developmental sequence.

We have stressed in this section the experiences of a boy in the first and second grades. We have seen how only the peer group can supply some of the formative experiences necessary for sound development of personality. Among the special contributions the peer group alone is able to make is the fulfilment of the child's needs for affiliation with social equals, for interchange of cooperative and assertive action with age-mates.

In the next section we will take up the case of a girl in the fifth and sixth grades. Her case will illustrate how action in a peer group affects performance in the classroom.

### **The Child Who Is Not Accepted**

The following excerpts from a year-long record of observations on a girl give us a glimpse of the girl's personality and her peer group activities. We have deliberately excluded from these selections the material which referred to her home life. The picture of the home "explains" in many ways how Cynthia comes to have the personality traits she exhibits, but for the purpose of this chapter let us see how her peer group learnings progressed.

In autumn the observing teacher recorded:

*October 20*

After being practically avoided by her classmates for a week or more, Cynthia was finally taken back into favor by the girls. She has been playing alone so much at school that I felt sorry for her and talked to the girls about it—and they really tried hard to include her in their play. However, during the first recess following her "acceptance" by the group, she jumped off the seesaw and let the child on the other end hit the ground. Of course, this being only one of many evidences of thoughtlessness, the children "got mad at" her again, but have again begun to play with her.

In this instance the teacher entered the situation in a direct fashion. It was through no growth of acceptance on the part of the students that

Cynthia was taken into the play group after being isolated for a considerable period. That the present teacher's action had little effect on Cynthia's social progress is seen in subsequent observations:

*October 28*

... Then she (Cynthia) said, "The girls, three of them, are starting a good club and have asked three boys to be in it. I want to be in it. When I am not around they get together and make secret plans, but when I come back, they quit." The other girls said that she was in some of their clubs, but Cynthia replied, "None of them ever amount to anything." Cynthia cried all day. All of the trouble is over the club spoken of previously. One child said to me, "Miss Hurley, Cynthia is crying to be in our club but we can't let her be in it. She just can't get along with anybody. In the second place, our mothers don't want us to play with her out of school because we are learning bad habits from her. In the third place, her mother doesn't want her to play with boys because she is always getting hurt." Here Cynthia broke in, "Oh, hush, that was last year," and she looked at me in a shy manner, as though she thought I hadn't heard the other child's statement. After we had talked over the "club question," the girls decided to let Cynthia be in the club, but gave her three chances to prove that she can get along with them.

Less than two weeks later in November the following note appears in the record:

I heard today that Cynthia has already ruined two of three chances to be in the club with some of the children. Again today she cried practically all day and did not pay attention in class, but read her story book, until I took it away for the rest of the day. I noticed at the noon recess that she is playing with first- and second-grade children, as she did last year.

This record is of interest because it shows how out-of-school play situations, and how the dictates of parents about who shall play with whom, can lead to emotional upsets, disturbing the progress of an entire classroom. Such scenes as these can occupy much of a teacher's attention and may heighten the emotional tensions of all pupils in the class to the extent that little effective teaching or learning takes place during the remainder of a day.

The girls involved had stipulated that Cynthia was to have "three chances." They anticipated that Cynthia's personality would not change overnight, even though she were admitted to the girls' club. The discerning teacher knows that social acceptance in children's groups depends basically on the inner qualities that the group members bring to each other. The qualities and skills of one help satisfy the needs of another, and unless this takes place on a mutual basis there is little possibility of an emotionally satisfying "meeting" taking place.

Another important point in this record is Cynthia's playing with first- and second-grade children. Since she was in the sixth grade, this represents quite a large discrepancy between her age and size and those of the children with whom she was playing. Such action is usually termed regressive behavior for the person literally "goes back" to acting like a much younger child than he or she may be.

Before the end of the month this girl evidently had come out of the regressive phase into which she had withdrawn. It was noted that:

Except for a very few pupils, it seems that the attitude of the class is changing for the better insofar as Cynthia is concerned. She no longer plays with first- and second-grade children, but has been with the girls of our own class. I have noted, too, that Cynthia seems to want to answer more in class and has been joking and talking with others, instead of fussing and fighting. It may be that the class has at last begun to understand Cynthia better, and she in turn is changing because of their attention.

The particularly noteworthy feature here is the interplay between social activity in the peer group and willingness to do schoolwork, to participate and take an interest in the class. This is in marked contrast to the previous record in which Cynthia was portrayed as inattentive and uncooperative in class at the same time she had withdrawn from any attempt to play with her own age-mates.

In Cynthia's case, schoolwork suffered when social relations with peers took a downward turn. In other cases, of course, the opposite may occur—at certain stages of development, as illustrated previously in the case of Don, inattentiveness in the classroom may be a sign that the child is succeeding with his peers. Sometimes the child who is a problem to his teacher may be the best-adjusted child and he may be the child who is preoccupied with the developmental task of adopting the code of his peer group; this expectation of the peer group may normally take precedence over the expectations of the teacher.

Neither do we wish to imply, on the other hand, that poor school adjustment is always a direct reflection of success or failure in the peer group. There are, of course, a great many possible causes for a child's inattentiveness or failure to meet the demands of the classroom situation. Most teachers are aware of such factors as retardation in mental development and specific emotional disturbances, but many teachers have thus far been unaware of the importance of the peer code in influencing the child's school behavior.

In a brief note at the end of November further light is introduced on Cynthia's problems.

It seems that Cynthia is getting back in the "mood" she was in some time ago. She is not playing with other children as well, and is again

playing with first- and second-grade children. Her classwork is going down again and she wants everything her way, which, of course, she does not get with the older children. She has gotten in the habit of muttering to herself and making faces when something displeases her.

Observation of her behavior had progressed beyond that of the previous similar reference. The coinciding of several kinds of behavior is described. At the same time that she starts again to play with younger children, abandoning the play group of her own age-mates, there occurs a falling off of her level of schoolwork. By playing with younger children, we now see she is able to exercise some sort of dominating behavior; specifically, "she wants everything her own way" and the younger children are unable to resist her as her peers could. A need to dominate, control, and direct other people is a perfectly normal feeling. Normally the expression of such a need on an equalitarian basis, especially in a democratic social structure, is summed up neatly by the phrase "give and take." This phrase represents a common sense recognition that everyone cannot have his own way all of the time.

By contrast, the following note shows how a gain in social interaction with the girls of her class acted to the benefit of both herself and the teacher. This gain can be counted not only in terms of Cynthia's improved personality picture and social learning; it can be counted also as a gain in the strictly academic learning system. This observation can be multiplied many times by teachers everywhere who know that the disturbed, worrying, unhappy, or quarrelsome child tends not to learn academic material as well or rapidly as the happy, socially adjusted pupil.

For the first two days after the Christmas holidays, Cynthia had been "out of humor" with everyone. She and the other girls argued, fussed, and did everything but fight. At recess, when she was not fussing, she either talked with me or read a book. I found out that the cause was that one of the girls had given a party during the holidays and had not invited Cynthia. On Friday, at noon, she was invited to become a member of the girls' club which she had so wanted to be in. Since then, she has not fussed or argued with anyone and seems to be fully accepted by the group. Instead of tears and a frown, Cynthia is now one of the brightest looking pupils in the room.

Simply for reasons of space we have been unable to quote every observation on Cynthia for that year. Had we been able to do so, the reader would see that gradually the class as a whole became more acceptant of her, and that during the rest of the school term there were far less frequent mentions of Cynthia being excluded by the group or of violent tearful altercation.

In the case of Cynthia we have tried to show the complex web of interrelations between people and how such relationships affect behavior. The individual develops and grows in many areas at once. Changes

in emotional relations to playmates affect the quality of work in arithmetic or geography. Life is not a number of discrete capsules: so much intelligence, so much spirit and vitality, so much sociability, and so on. Rather, the person acts as a whole; what happens in one area of life is vitally important for what may happen in another area.

### **The Adolescent and the Peer Group**

In this section we want to describe some of the features that predominate in the case of an adolescent girl, Lydia, so far as her relations to her peers are concerned. Again we must keep in mind that this chapter makes no attempt to assay the importance of peer group learnings as compared with those learnings gained from parents, teachers, employers, or other adults. Each has an influence, but the peer group provides learning opportunities which no other group can offer.

#### *October 1946*

During the next several weeks Lydia came in frequently crying and saying: "I don't like it here. The girls don't like me." Each time I persuaded her to try it again and to try to get better acquainted with some of the teachers who might help her.

#### *November 1946*

Lydia came to me several times complaining that the girls in her home economics class didn't like her. She even asked that I call some of them to my office to talk to them about it. I tried to bolster her self-confidence by helping her to see that the girls who worried her weren't too successful themselves and might be only trying to tease her. In November Lydia came in to ask if she might borrow \$.75 as her share towards buying a corsage for girls at her lunch table who were celebrating birthdays. The custom (a very strong one here) is for the girls to contribute toward a corsage which the girl wears the day of her birthday. The recipient brings a cake which she shares with the other girls during lunch. Lydia said it was pretty hard to bring so much at once and anyhow she didn't think the girls really wanted her at their table. "They don't talk to me." But she didn't want me to suggest that she not participate in the activity. I lent her the money which she repaid the following week.

#### *January 1947*

Two weeks later Lydia again complained. "The girls in home economics class don't like me. They sit and talk about me. I'd like to drop the course. Could I transfer to Girls' Technical High?"

#### *End of January 1947*

Shortly after this Lydia turned in an excellent notebook in her home economics class and received the best grade in the class. This seemed to give her the confidence she needed. She told me about it and said maybe she really did know as much as the other girls in the class. She never again complained of their not liking her.



*November 20, 1947*

Lydia came in after morning club period (she belongs to "white collar girls"—anyone may join until the quota is filled). She had on a white blouse and checked skirt and looked very neat. She smiled pleasantly and asked, "Miss Jones, may I come in to talk to you sixth period today?"

I had to tell her that I was attending a conference this afternoon, but could see her tomorrow if it was something that could wait.

"Oh, tomorrow will be all right," she replied rather airily.

She carried a white crepe paper bow and, holding it up, said, "We white collar girls have to wear one of these today."

I said, "Oh, you are a white collar girl, I imagine you enjoy that."

She answered, "I was in study hall last year and I didn't want that again."

*December 13, 1947*

One day Lydia stopped in my office for a needle and thread to sew up a small rip in her skirt. She said, "Miss Jones, do you notice how much I've gained since last year?" I answered, "Well, your face looks fuller and it is becoming to you."

She answered, "Oh, I feel better than I did last year. I laugh a lot now. You know some of those girls I thought didn't like me in home economics class are my best friends now."

These six excerpts illustrate again the need for finding a place within the group. They show how accomplishment in school is reflected by changes in attitudes toward peers. It was only after Lydia had been able to compare herself with classmates favorably that she was able to put aside her fears of them and enter into friendly associations with them. A year after these observations were recorded she had become an active participant in the "Girls' League."

The following record gives us a picture of Lydia's growing interest in the opposite sex.

*November 21, 1947*

The next day as I returned to my office at beginning of the sixth period, Lydia was there waiting for me. I closed the door and asked her to sit down. She plunged into her subject without any preliminaries.

LYDIA: Miss Jones, I'd like to ask you how a girl can get acquainted with a boy she doesn't know. (She did not blush or seem especially self-conscious.)

MISS JONES: There's a boy in school you'd like to get acquainted with?

LYDIA: Yes, there is. His name is Ed Brown and I think he seems pretty nice and I wondered if it was all right for me to talk to him.

MISS JONES: You'd like to speak to him at least, wouldn't you?

LYDIA: Yes, and I don't suppose I should stop to talk to him when he is with other boys. He might not like that.

MISS JONES: No, he might not. Our school is a friendly school and a girl could easily at least speak to a boy in the hall.

LYDIA: Do you think it would be all right if I just said, "Hello, Ed?" Just like that?

MISS JONES: I think it would. He seems like a nice boy, I imagine.

LYDIA: Oh, yes. He's not a roughneck like some of the boys around here.

MISS JONES: He seems sort of your type then. Is he a sophomore?

LYDIA: No, he's a junior and I think he's like me—he doesn't have a girl. I don't know whether he has a telephone or not. There are three Browns in the directory, but I don't think any of them are where he lives.

MISS JONES: You were sort of wondering about whether he had a telephone?

LYDIA: Yes, but I don't think I'd better call him yet.

MISS JONES: Perhaps you don't really know him well enough yet.

LYDIA: Yes, and he might wonder why I did.

It is clear that Lydia had come to rely on the opinions of her counselor; but, even so, this is a fairly outspoken declaration to an adult. It is important to see how in this interview the girl arrived at nearly all of her attitudes by herself. The counselor didn't force them on her, and those she evolved were truly her own.

In succeeding interviews Lydia brought in a picture of the boy which had been clipped out of an annual, told of an argument with her brother over whether she really had a boy friend or not, and asked the counselor for "Eddie's schedule" so she could use stairs and hallways to "bump into him" between classes. Through strategy of this sort she attempted to bring herself to his attention. (It is interesting to note that the sympathetic counselor cooperated with Lydia at this point and provided her with "Eddie's schedule.")

*December 20, 1947*

... she asked what sort of entertainment she could have at a Christmas party at her house. She planned to invite Ed and some other couples. I started to suggest something when she interrupted with this statement, "Miss Jones, I asked Dinie to help me with Ed, but her boy friend wouldn't let her."

MISS JONES: He didn't want Dinie to help you at all?

LYDIA: No, he said he didn't want Dinie mixed up in anything between a boy and a girl.

MISS JONES: So that was all off, I suppose.



LYDIA: Dinie did tell Ed I like him and now *I'm on my own*. Now we talk at my locker.

MISS JONES: You feel things are going pretty well now.

*January 5, 1948*

. . . I told her to sit down and tell me what was on her mind. She began with this remark, "I guess I was too forward with Ed. (Sometimes she calls him 'Ed' and sometimes, 'Eddie.') I guess I talked too much. I shouldn't have let him know how I felt." I didn't get any more of this conversation down. The substance was that she had invited him to the Christmas party and he hadn't come. He had changed and didn't talk to her now. She seemed sad but remarked rather philosophically a second time, "I guess I shouldn't have acted so interested in him."

*January 7, 1948*

LYDIA: Eddie said something to me yesterday. I was behind him and he was with a bunch of boys. He said, "How was Christmas?" I said, "Oh, all right." He thanked me for my card.

MISS JONES: Did he say anything about the party?

LYDIA: No, and I am mad at him. I met him this morning and I just turned my head. Maybe he'll take the hint pretty soon and know I'm mad. Maybe he'll ask me what's the matter.

MISS JONES: You won't be too hard on him, will you?

LYDIA: No, I guess not. But I know he could have come to the party. Nobody works from 12 to 12 seven days a week. He could have at least given me a ring. But I don't care, I had a good time.

MISS JONES: I don't suppose he has any other girl?

LYDIA: I heard he takes a girl home from the show, a blonde that works there as cashier, a girl who quit school. I told my mother they ought to have an old woman work there who wore a starched dress and had rheumatism instead of those girls.

*February 3, 1948*

Suddenly, without any preliminaries, she burst out with, "I saw Ed today and I said 'Hi, Ed' and he said, 'Hello, Lydia' and then he winked at me. That was all."

I said, "You haven't ever said anything about the Christmas party, I suppose?" She said, "No, I think he has forgotten about it so I'm not going to say anything. He isn't working at the same place any more." I said, "I suppose he got tired of it?" She answered, "I expect he didn't like the hours very well having to be up so late at nights and then having to get up early to go to school."

We know no more about how Lydia's attempt to interest Eddie worked out. These excerpts include many of the "devices" girls use to establish a relationship with a boy, and in her case they worked with at least partial success.

By the next school term Lydia has forgotten Ed and is well into the adolescent swim of "dating."

*November 4, 1948*

A girl came in to sign up (outside guest) for the Sadie Hawkins dance. After she left Lydia spoke again.

LYDIA: I met a fellow last fall. He called me up Monday night and Tuesday night and wanted me to go out with him. But I'm not going.

MISS JONES: You don't like him?

LYDIA: No.

MISS JONES: Maybe he's really nice.

LYDIA: He's so fat and I'm so skinny. Wouldn't we look nice walking down the street? I guess I'm just fussy.

BETTY: (She had been going ahead with her work, but now turned to Lydia) What's his name?

LYDIA: Richard. I don't know his last name.

MISS JONES: He's persistent, isn't he?

LYDIA: Yes, but I'm not going with him. He's got a Nash. But I'm not going to go with him.

*November 16, 1948*

LYDIA: I finally found out who this Alice is. I saw her picture in the annual. She seems all right. (Lydia had heard that Alice had dated some boy after she had stopped dating him last fall.) I walked up to her in the library. She was copying something out of a book. I thought she was someone else. I said, "I beg your pardon." She just smiled. Lydia continued to me, "That fellow still parks his car in front of school. It is a '37 Buick. My girl friend and I were walking along. He passed by and didn't say anything. Once he honked his horn. Probably he just knows me as a friend."

MISS JONES: That might be.

LYDIA: He works Thursday, Friday, and Saturday at a gas station on T—— and R——R——. His type are always on the lookout for new girls. But then the boys are more fortunate than girls. They just have to get around. It was nice of him to come into the store Thursday to talk to me.

MISS JONES: Maybe you wish you hadn't broken off.

LYDIA: Yes, I do. But then you learn by experience. I'm not going to let it worry me too much.

Lydia kept account of what happened to her old boy friends, and by the end of the 1948-49 school term she seems to have been involved with several different boys. She seemed well on her way to becoming an active, sociable, and essentially normal girl when our observations ended.

A complete picture of heterosexual development would require discussion of a boy as well as a girl. We are unable to present a boy's case here;

but, using Lydia's case as a point of reference, some brief remarks can serve to point up differences and similarities between the sexes.

Most boys mature physically a year or so later than girls. Their interest in getting into the organized pattern of dating and social interactions with girls seems to lag correspondingly. Thus it is a common pattern for many girls in high schools to date boys who are a year or two older than themselves. Another difference between the sexes is the importance of clubs and sororities in the lives of the girls. While boys' clubs of a formal nature appear from time to time, they rarely exhibit the stability of girls' sororities. By contrast, boys channel a much larger portion of their energies into the field of organized sports. Boys' gangs sometimes last through the entire four years of high school, but attempts to formalize them—to set up officers, dues, rights, privileges of members, and so on—often will cause the group to break up. In matters of social organization, acuteness of social perceptions, and in established, hierarchal systems of regulated interaction the girls reach a far more complex level of development than do boys by the second or third year of high school.

### What Is the Role of the Teacher?

Throughout the examination of these cases from the first-grade student to the high-school girl we have attempted to show the individual behaving in the social context of his or her age-group, and adapting to the mode of social behaviors expected by his peers. In every case we have seen a period of trial and error, of upsets and rebuffs, before integration with a

*The role of the teacher is to understand and work with the peer group.*



group of peers could be achieved. It has been emphasized that only the peer group can supply certain crucial social interactions by which personality develops.

We have implied that the peer group develops a set of values, a social organization, and a code of behavior of its own. These are not only different from, but at times are even opposed to, those of adults, and we have tried to illustrate the importance of the peer code in the lives of normal boys and girls.

By and large, teachers, parents, and other adults tend to ignore the social reality of the child society, or even deny its existence. We go along expecting the child to conform to adult expectations, as if there were no other set of expectations the child is trying to meet. It must be admitted, of course, that we are still far from knowing all we would like to know about the "peer culture" and how it operates. But we have accumulated sufficient data to make it clear that our task, as adults, is to acknowledge the peer society and to try to understand it. The teacher especially must make every effort to observe the social organization of the child's world; to accept the fact that she, as an adult, is likely to be excluded from this world; and to accept the reality of the dual social systems in which the child lives. We must not only understand the peer code; we must accept it for what it is.

This does not mean that the adult, and particularly the teacher, has no role to perform. This does not imply, as one teacher put it, that we should "simply move over, fold our hands, and give the youngsters free rein." It is nevertheless true that the direct and authoritarian intervention of a teacher does little to alleviate the stress of a situation such as Cynthia experienced. Attempts to adjust social discord in a superficial way such as simply "talking to" pupils and "getting" them to take some isolated member back into a play group will seldom strike at the underlying difficulties. Cynthia's case was a good illustration of this point. Cynthia and her classmates had to work out their own social problems, and in their own way. Yet Cynthia's teacher had probably done no harm in the situation. Although her direct intervention accomplished little, the teacher had evidently not antagonized the group. We have no evidence that the group became more hostile to Cynthia because the teacher went to her defense. The latter might well have happened, had the teacher censured the group.

This leads us to the point that the teacher's role is neither that of authoritarian intervention nor that of "hands off." In cases like Cynthia's, where a child is being rejected by age-mates, perhaps the most constructive thing the teacher can do is to accept the rejected child herself. At the same time she must be acceptant of the feelings of the other children, not try to

"argue them out of it," and not take a punitive attitude toward them. In this way, the teacher creates a situation free of censure, and one in which the group is free to change its attitudes. It is most difficult for a teacher to stand by while what seems to her to be cruel or destructive social action is in progress. On the other hand, she must refrain from "mothering" the isolated child to the point where she widens the breach between him and the others. If the social isolate becomes "teacher's pet," he will be all the more rejected by his peers.

In general, the teacher will be doing a positive service if she does all she can to create a situation in which free give and take is possible—a situation where individual children can be accepted into the peer group by virtue of their own particular contributions. This means, in the first place, creating an atmosphere free of tension, where boys and girls have no need to punish a member of the group as an outlet for their own frustrations. In the second place, this implies creating a situation rich and varied enough to allow many different types of children to win status with their fellows. For example, the boy who is physically inept, awkward and poor at games, is likely to be the boy who will be rejected by his peers in late childhood. If the teacher can provide a variety of activities—music, shop, arts and crafts, committee work, and so on—she may help such a boy to shine in an area other than one which demands physical prowess. She may help him to be accepted by his peers because she helps him show what he can contribute to the group.

In summary, the role of the teacher is to understand the peer group and to work with it, not against it. In so doing, she will be helping children to develop normally and in a manner conducive to mental health.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# Body Processes Help To Determine Behavior and Development<sup>1</sup>

BERNICE NEUGARTEN

**T**HE child grows and develops as a whole; every child grows simultaneously in *all* aspects of his life—biological, sociological, and psychological. All areas are interrelated, and change in any one brings change in all the others. Each and every aspect of the child's life has its effect upon mental health.

While we can no longer speak of the development of "mind," "body," and "spirit" as separate entities, it is useful to consider each one separately if we are to understand the role that each plays in the total process. We shall be concerned in this chapter with certain biological factors of growth and development and their relation to mental health; yet this discussion must be seen in the context of the other chapters which precede and follow it.

The fact that the child is a biological organism has been well taken into account in some areas of our current school practice, but has been neglected in others. Most schools, for example, provide for regular physical examinations of pupils, for good hygienic conditions of cleanliness, light, heat, and play space. The curriculum provides for physical education and the teaching of good health habits; much of the curriculum is planned in light of the child's physical abilities at various stages of development. Most teachers are, furthermore, well aware of the importance of good nutrition, of the effects of health and disease upon the child's ability to learn, and of the effects of gross physical handicaps and deformities upon personality.

<sup>1</sup> The writer is indebted to Carson McGuire, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Texas, and to Robert J. Havighurst, Committee on Human Development, University of Chicago, for some of the material used in this chapter.



Yet, in certain other areas, the biological aspects of human growth and development have been less fully taken into account, especially the relations between physical growth and the social and emotional development of children.

This chapter will be concerned with only three of the many biological factors which have important implications for mental health: differences among children in energy output; differences in body build; and differences in patterns of physical growth. These three factors are themselves inter-related.

### **Differences Among Children in Energy Output**

All living bodies need energy. The human body, like every other living thing, uses energy—for doing work, for moving around, for keeping the internal machinery operating, the blood circulating, the stomach digesting, and so on. Also, the human organism needs energy for the growth of its parts.

There are great individual differences among children both in the amount of energy-producing materials they need and in the amount of energy they expend. One youngster is very quiet, placid, passive. He seems to wait for the world to present him with a situation requiring action, and then performs the least possible amount of activity in meeting the situation. Across the aisle from this child is another who is a bundle of energy. He is always reaching out for new experiences and new stimulations rather than waiting for things to come to him. The energetic child may have to eat a good deal more food in order to keep up his energy than the quiet, passive youngster. He may also be thin (though this is not always the case) and may seem to be "just skin and bones," whereas the quiet, passive youngster may gain in weight because he does not use up his food in the form of activity.

These differences among children in energy level may be due to differences in heredity; that is, one child may inherit the tendency to use up great quantities of energy, whereas another child may inherit the tendency toward sluggish, passive behavior. The differences may also be due to differences in nutrition. A child may be listless and inert simply because he is not getting the right quantity or the right type of food.

Differences in energy output may also be due to differences in the "emotional climate" in which children have been reared. In some families where emotional tension is high and where there is stress upon activity, the child has become accustomed to reacting quickly and intensely to a wide variety of situations which would leave another child untouched and unresponsive. We often speak of the "over-stimulated" child as one who expends a great deal of energy in his emotional life. The "emotional" child may have no

greater amount of energy at his disposal than the "unemotional" child; he may simply be expending his energy in different ways. The child who is in a state of high compulsion and who is jumpy and irritable as a consequence may *appear* to be much more energetic than another child who is accustomed to meeting life in a relaxed fashion. Whatever the cause, every teacher is well aware that children vary enormously in energy output.

Sammy is a boy with a high energy output. He cannot sit still for two minutes; he is always jumping up to sharpen his pencil, always having to leave the room on some pretext or other, always poking his neighbors, always flourishing his hands when he wants to say something, always speaking out of turn. Sammy is very apt to become a source of annoyance, but if the teacher tries to squelch him, the result is merely that Sammy sits quiet for a minute or two and then is on the go again. The problem for Sammy's teacher is to find some way in which his high energy output can be used for socially and intellectually desirable purposes.

While she is trying to keep track of Sammy she is very apt to overlook little Tommy who sits very quietly, is no trouble at all, but may lack sufficient energy to participate in regular classroom activities, let alone energy enough to get into mischief. Quiet, passive Tommy may need just as much, or more, attention than energetic Sammy.

While there are great differences from one child to another, there are also differences in the amount of energy available to the same child at different periods in his life. At times of rapid physical growth (puberty, for example), the body requires more energy to maintain itself. We have all been struck with wonder at the great quantities of food an adolescent boy or girl can stack away at one sitting. The same growth phenomenon accounts for the fact that some adolescents go through a period of listlessness when they seem easily fatigued and seem to have little available energy. While many schools make provision for added rest periods for the young child of low energy level, few schools have made the same provisions for those adolescents who might benefit in similar fashion.

As has already been indicated, sometimes the reason for a child's overpassivity or over-activity may not be physical at all, but may be primarily emotional. An apparently listless child may be a very anxious child, so consumed with apprehension and worry because of something which has gone on at home, or because of something he fears will occur on the school ground at recess, that he is unable to pay attention and put out the amount of energy needed for successful classwork. Anxiety may block other, more constructive, uses of energy. On the other hand, a very active and irritable child may also be behaving this way because of anxiety. He may worry about whether or not his teacher likes him, or about his lack of good social relations with his age-mates; and he may try to attract attention in ways which are bothersome to the teacher and to the other children.



In general, then, the energy output of the child is something which a teacher should attempt to evaluate and understand. If she becomes convinced that the child's behavior has a physical basis, she must then try to adjust the classroom situation to his energy output. If she feels that something can be done medically to improve his energy status, she can call the attention of the physician or of the parents to the child's possible need for medical advice. If the teacher becomes convinced that the behavior has an emotional basis, she can then ask for assistance in understanding and helping the child.

For the great bulk of children, however, this energy output will fall within normal limits; and the teacher must simply recognize that some children will be more active than others, and that her job is to help create a situation in which everyone's energy is used to the benefit of himself and the whole group.

The teacher must also be aware of her own energy level and of its effect upon the group. Perhaps most classrooms are, naturally enough, paced at the teacher's own level of energy output. The quick, energetic teacher may find it difficult to understand the child of low energy, just as the slow-moving teacher with little available energy often finds it difficult to cope with what seems to her to be a room full of children, all of them ready to burst at the seams.

### Differences in Body Build

Children, as well as adults, vary enormously in terms of body type. Any typical classroom is likely to include the short and stocky, the tall and thin, the strong and muscular, the frail and anemic-looking.

The child's body build is largely determined by hereditary factors. If he comes from a family line most of whose members are thin and fragile, the child is likely to be thin and fragile regardless of how much he happens to eat. If he comes from a family line whose members are chubby and broadly built, the child is likely to be chubby regardless of how much he tries to restrict his diet.

Such differences in body type make it extremely difficult to decide what is "normal" body size for a boy or girl at any given age. There has been much confusion in the past over the concept of "normalcy," largely because "normal" has been used synonymously with "average." "Average" height or "average" weight for, say, a ten-year-old boy is an abstraction. It has been computed from measuring large numbers of ten-year-old boys, all of them different in body build, and few of whom measure the same as the mathematical average. It may be quite normal for the short, stocky boy to be two inches shorter than the "average"; and quite normal for the tall, slender boy to be two inches taller than the "average."

There are, consequently, hazards involved in the use of height-weight tables as they are commonly used in our schools. Many a child has been harried and fussed over because, compared to the table of norms, he is "overweight" or "underweight" or "too short" or "too tall" for his age. We must stop comparing children with the hypothetical "averages," and we must evaluate the child's physical status in terms of his own body build and his own past record of growth.<sup>2</sup>

There has been a great deal of research directed to the question of whether or not certain body types are accompanied by certain personality characteristics—that is, whether tall, thin people are, by nature, different in personality from short, stocky people, and so on. While the evidence is not clear, it is true that, by and large, in everyday life we judge people by their appearance. We expect a fat little boy to be jolly, good-humored, unaggressive, and sometimes petulant and childish. We expect the wiry, muscular lad to be energetic and vigorous and somewhat aggressive. The pale, fragile-looking little girl we expect to be shy, fearful, and always in the background of any social group.

It does not take long for a child to learn what is expected of him. To a very considerable extent, the human "self" is a social product, made up of other people's attitudes and expectations for the individual. Thus the fat child may or may not be spontaneously jolly and easy-going, but he finds that he is *expected* to be so. In similar fashion, many a red-haired child *learns* to get what he wants by showing temper outbursts. Red-heads are "expected" to be hot-heads, so their temper tantrums may not meet the same punishment as the temper tantrums shown by a blonde or brunette.

Children are, wittingly or unwittingly, assigned certain roles to perform in the classroom and on the playground on the basis of their body type. The assigned role may not be altogether pleasant and comfortable for the youngster in question. Learning to be what you are expected to be is sometimes achieved only at the cost of considerable stress and strain.

Furthermore, in a society which sets a certain premium upon one type of physique as compared with another, there are added complications. In our society which pokes fun at fatness, for instance, a fat boy or girl may well develop feelings of inferiority—similarly with the tall girl, the short boy, the masculine-looking girl, and the feminine-looking boy.

<sup>2</sup> One method of evaluating physical growth which takes these factors into account is the use of Wetzel's Grid Graph, a method which is coming into use in many of our schools. By the age of five or six, the child's body has settled into the pattern of growth characteristic for persons of his general body type. If the child continues to grow normally, repeated measures of his height and weight will fall along the "channel" of growth appropriate to him. The Wetzel "Grid for Evaluating Physical Fitness" and information concerning its use may be obtained from the Newspaper Enterprise Association Service, Inc., 1200 W. 3rd St., Cleveland, Ohio.

It is the teacher's responsibility to understand the roles which are customarily attached to certain physiques and to help children make constructive adaptations to those roles. Thus, for example, the muscular-looking boy may not be the teacher's wisest choice for helping her move the desks around and for carrying the armful of books from one room to another. And the attractive, well-poised girl may not be the wisest choice for being the room hostess. There may be others who need these experiences much more.

Above all, it is the teacher's responsibility to understand that children whose bodies are often judged unfavorably are the children who need special support and special understanding. The teacher can do a great deal to help such children develop a self-concept which is tolerable to them and to help them learn to respect themselves in spite of their shortcomings. It is not only the child with a physical deformity, a limp, a twisted backbone, or crossed eyes, who feels "outside" the group in one way or another; it is also the child who is too short, too fat, too weak, or too awkward. These children especially need affection and emotional support from the teacher. If they understand that the teacher likes them and respects them, they have then made a start toward gaining enough self-esteem so that they can put their best foot forward in their relationships with their age-mates.

### Differences in Physical Growth Patterns

There is a characteristically human pattern of growth which applies to most of the body (the bones, muscles, and viscera) and consequently, to growth in height and weight. In brief, this pattern is one in which growth is very rapid at the beginning (pre-natal, post-natal, and infancy), then slows down during the years from two to six or seven. After this initial slowing down in early childhood, there is a period of four or five years of smooth, slow, even growth, followed then by a period of more rapid and variable growth during the years of puberty. After puberty, there are several years of slowly decreasing growth.<sup>3</sup>

The average child at school age has already been through the years of his most rapid and tumultuous growth. His body has stabilized. His temperature is much less variable than it was as an infant when even the slightest infection would cause him to run an alarmingly high fever. The fluids in his body have reached a more stable level of concentration. The

<sup>3</sup> See: Keliher, Alice V. *Life and Growth*. New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1948.

Meek, Lois Hayden, and others. *The Personal-Social Development of Boys and Girls with Implications for Secondary Education*. New York: Progressive Education Association, 1940.

National Society for the Study of Education. *Adolescence*. Forty-Third Yearbook, Part I. Chicago: Distributed by the Department of Education, University of Chicago Press. Chapters II, III, IV, V.

amount of sugar in his blood and the amount of salt are now kept within limits by mechanisms which will enable him to retain his physiological balance throughout the rest of his life.

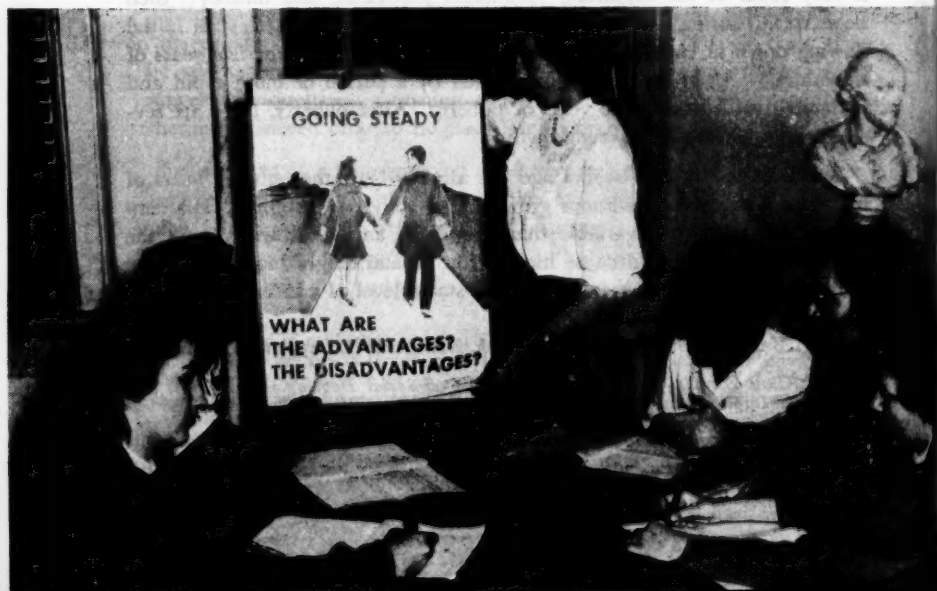
The first four or five years of the elementary school are a period of slow, steady, physical growth for most children. During this period, most boys and girls lose their babyish roundness and become rather lean, angular, and muscular. Their muscles develop at a rate which enables them to gain steadily in physical strength and physical skill.

Then come the dramatic and often violent growth changes of puberty. There is first a marked increase in height and weight, so that a youngster may shoot up as much as five inches in a single year and put on as much as twenty or thirty pounds of weight. In girls this period of rapid growth, which usually lasts from two to three years, comes to a culmination shortly before the menarche, the beginning of menstruation.

The cycle of puberty—the period of rapidly increasing growth followed by a period of declining though still rapid growth—lasts from five to seven years and is completed in most girls by the age of about fifteen or sixteen, and in boys by the age of seventeen or eighteen. There are usually another two or three years of very slow gain in height even after the close of the cycle of puberty.

*During adolescence boy-girl relations become a major concern.*

*Waco Public Schools*



Although all human beings undergo this peculiarly human pattern of growth, every individual has his own particular variation of the common pattern. It is possible to say, on the one hand, that every human being follows the same pattern of physical growth that every other human being follows; and, on the other hand, that all human beings (with the rare exception of identical twins) grow in unique fashion.<sup>4</sup>

There are great individual differences from the very beginning. One infant gains weight very rapidly for the first six months, then slows down. Another puts on weight slowly but consistently. Some children grow by spurts; others by small, regular increases. Girls tend to be ahead of boys in physical maturation at all times from birth on, even though they are ahead in terms of actual *size* for only a brief period of two or three years beginning at the age of ten or eleven.

The differences in growth patterns are, however, most marked after the period of late childhood. The pubertal growth cycle may begin in one youngster at the age of seven or eight; in another, not until fourteen or fifteen. One girl may do all her growing within three or four years; in another, the pubertal cycle may take seven or eight years. Some children go through puberty with relatively few dramatic changes in appearance. For others there is marked variability and lack of symmetry, so that certain parts of the body grow faster than other parts; these are the boys and girls who may seem to be "all hands" or "all feet" at one period in their growth.

The variability of a group of boys and girls is at its greatest at about the age of thirteen or fourteen, or at about the eighth-grade level. In the eighth grade, if boys and girls are lined up according to height, there is a greater range between the shortest and the tallest than will be found in any other grade in elementary or secondary school. As the junior-high teacher knows, it is very difficult to develop a school program that attempts to bring boys and girls together as social partners during this period of about two or three years (from about twelve to fourteen or fifteen) when differences in size and maturity between youngsters are maximum. Furthermore, the fact that girls enter the cycle of puberty about two years ahead of boys means that the girls are in advance of the boys—in size, physiological maturity, and social maturity. This adds another problem to the many difficulties which beset the teacher who attempts to handle a seventh-, eighth-, or ninth-grade class as a single social unit.

In one eighth grade, the children had been studied by a research staff for several years. There was, among the many types of data available, information concerning physical development of each member of the group. Midway in the first semester, the class was beginning a new

<sup>4</sup> See also Chapter Six, "Developmental Tasks: I. The Concept and Its Importance," Figure 1, "Stages of Development in Relation to Changes in Rate of Growth in Height." P. 81.

curricular project which was to last for several weeks. The group was to work in teams of four, with the teams chosen and the tables arranged according to their own wishes.

It was observed, after initial arrangement and rearrangement, that the tables were finally arranged in form of a V. At the base of the V and at the front of the room, were two tables of mixed boy-and-girl teams. These were the most physically mature youngsters in the group. Next, on each side, was a table of rather mature girls. The remaining tables were all same-sex teams, boys on one side, girls on the other, with the least mature children at the back of the room. Here was a rather neat example of how differences in physical maturity are reflected in the social organization of a group of boys and girls.

Perhaps one of the implications of differences in physical growth patterns is that schools might well experiment with flexible grouping arrangements, particularly at the junior-high levels, which would bring children of similar maturity together for at least part of the day, or for at least certain types of school activities.

These differences between individuals of a given sex and between the sexes indicate that chronological age is not a very good measure of the size and weight, or the social and emotional maturity, we might expect. If we had some better measure of biological age than just the number of birthdays, we might be able to group together boys and girls of more nearly the same life age and life experience. This would make our task as teachers somewhat easier. However, although there have been several attempts to measure physiological age through such things as bone development, tooth development, and other purely biological factors, we have not yet found anything which is entirely suitable. It will probably be a long time before the American people give up chronological age as the index of a child's development.

Differences in the rate of maturing have important implications for the social and emotional development of children. The pre-pubertal boy or girl is, by and large, interested in childish pursuits. There is social cleavage between the sexes, where the girls think boys are rough and rude, and the boys think girls are sissies. During early adolescence, all this changes. Boy-girl relationships become a focus of preoccupation. Mixed parties, dancing, dating, concern over grooming, and personal appearance—these are only a few of the evidences that the child is becoming an adolescent. In the emotional area, there is likely to be anxiety over the rapid changes which are occurring in the body, and over the question, "Am I growing normally?"

The girl who is a "fast grower," entering the pubertal cycle ahead of the other girls in her group, is apt to face a period of emotional and social disturbance. Thus, Alice is what her mother and teacher call a "fast grower."



She was quick, agile, and independent at a very early age compared to other babies, and all through her early childhood she was skillful in games. She was somewhat larger than the other children and was very much a leader. All of this was good for Alice's self-prestige, and by the fourth grade she had become a little bit cocksure. Then, in the fifth grade, she began to shoot up in height, her breasts began to develop, and shortly before her eleventh birthday she had her first menstruation. All this made Alice more than a little uncomfortable, especially since the other girls pointed at her and talked about her frequently, and she had the feeling that the boys were looking at her in a peculiar way. Alice tried to find dresses that would hide her developing breasts, and she wore a very tight brassiere. She became self-conscious, and because she was one of the tallest youngsters in the class, even taller than most of the boys, she began to walk with stooped shoulders. She withdrew to the sideline because she felt too conspicuous when games were being played. At this point, it became extremely important to Alice how her mother, father, teacher, and other people treated her. It would make a great deal of difference in her later life if they reassured her and took her growth as something to be pleased about, or if they seemed to criticize her and to look at her as if she were somehow abnormal.

The girl who is a "late" grower is also likely to be faced with difficulties.

Jane, who grew up in the same neighborhood with Alice, was always a little bit short and a little bit awkward. Jane was still a little girl at the age of fourteen when she entered high school. She was small and undeveloped, and she didn't seem interested in the same things that her former girl friends were now interested in. She felt quite left out, especially at the parties which Alice and the other girls seemed to enjoy.

It was not until Jane was almost through the ninth grade and was reaching her fifteenth birthday that she, too, began to shoot up in height, to put on weight, and to show the beginnings of breast development. And it was not until she was just past her sixteenth birthday that she began to menstruate.

For Jane it was very important how her parents, teacher, and other people regarded her during these years when she herself was not certain if she would ever grow up into a young woman. Like Alice, she needed special reassurance and sympathy.

For boys too, the question of early or late maturity is one of great consequence in their social development. Unlike the early-maturing girl, however, the early-maturing boy seems to have the advantage over other boys. He is more on a par with girls of his own age, is likely to be sought after as a social partner, and is likely to feel a bit superior to the other boys who are still "kids."

The slow-maturing boy, on the other hand, usually has great difficulty. When he sees the other boys around him grow big and manly, he may begin to doubt his own masculinity. "Shorty" is a case in point, although



in his case emotional and social disturbance grew to more dramatic proportions than is likely to occur with most boys.

In the sixth grade, Shorty was, in many ways, the epitome of the prevailing neighborhood pattern for boys of his age. He was short and stocky, as his nickname implies, but he was no smaller than several other boys in his class. He was mischievous, aggressive, "all boy." He was an active participant in the boys' play at school. After school, he sold newspapers at a particularly busy traffic intersection. He specialized in selling to automobile customers, darting in and out among the cars with unusual daring and carrying on a constant flow of disjointed banter and sales talk. He enjoyed competitive situations with other boys; he was friendly, full of energy, and had achieved a firm place among his peers.

During the seventh and eighth grades, his exhilaration with life began to wane. The attention-getting devices, the clowning and wise-cracking, which had given him status in the elementary school were less acceptable now. He could not win status with the boys he called the "big shots." He began to talk about his lack of height and seemed to fasten upon it as the chief cause of his failure to achieve social recognition. The growth situation *was* hard to accept. He was not only distinctly short, but pubertal acceleration (growth of secondary sex characteristics, genitalia, and pubic hair) was retarded in relation to his fellows. While other boys were shooting up by inches every six months, Shorty was growing only by fractions of an inch. He took to hanging on bars or rings every day to "stretch himself," and he asked the physician what medicine he could take to make him grow. He turned a skeptical ear to all suggestions that many short boys had been successful in athletics and many short men had left their mark in world affairs.

His former friends "went soft" and learned to dance; they talked about girls. He found himself tolerated, but not accepted, by the boys as well as by the girls.

Shorty began to show signs of serious disturbance. The quality of his schoolwork became worse. Periods of hyperactivity alternated with periods of apathy and moodiness. An earlier habit of mouth breathing returned. He became sullen and quarrelsome.

When he entered high school, the situation was no better. He became preoccupied with the desire to own a car, but because his family could not afford one, the only way he could get a car was to recondition a junk-yard discard. He spent most of his spare time getting and installing second-hand parts. The days when the "heap" actually ran, Shorty was seen driving down the streets, waving and shouting vociferous greetings to everyone he knew.

One spring day, the boy was picked up by the police. He had been caught stealing auto parts from a junk-yard. He resisted arrest so strenuously that he had to be handcuffed and carried to the police car. He spent a tumultuous two weeks in the Detention Home, acting first like a wild animal, and then subsiding into a brooding silence. The consulting psychiatrist for the court made a tentative diagnosis of dementia

præcox. Fortunately, his family, the school counselor, and the research staff who had been following his development for several years came to his defense, and Shorty was released in his mother's custody.

The symptoms of acute mental disturbance subsided immediately. In the months that followed, he was helped in various ways to develop a more realistic evaluation of his life situation and to make a better adjustment. Eventually he completed his own pubertal cycle, made a job adjustment and, at last report, was "going steady" with an attractive girl.<sup>8</sup>

While "Shorty" finally came to terms with himself, the case is of interest in the context because it illustrates so vividly the relation of biological factors to emotional and social behavior—in short, to mental health.

The factors that we have been discussing in this chapter, as we have already said, are only a few of the biological factors important in mental health. The teacher must take the child's physical status pretty much as it comes, with the exception, of course, that she should always be on the lookout for children who may be ill or malnourished. Beyond that, fostering the mental hygiene of her students consists not in attempting to change the physical status of children, but rather in helping to set up an emotional atmosphere in which children of all energy levels, of all body types, and of all growth patterns can grow and flourish socially.

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<sup>8</sup> Taken from Stolz, Herbert R. "Shorty Comes to Terms with Himself." *Progressive Education* 17: 405-11; October 1940.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# Individuality Develops

ROBERT PECK

THE scene is the nursery room of a large maternity hospital. As a nurse pushes open the door a beam of light flashes across the cribs. As the light strikes the eyes of young James, the three-day-old pride of the Grey family, he blinks violently, tosses his arms and legs, and starts to cry. In the next crib is young Billy, also three days old, who lies quietly as the light flashes into his eyes and passes on. He blinks once or twice but does not move. Perhaps five seconds later he slowly raises his knees and lowers them again.

If we observe Jimmy and Billy for the next several weeks or months, it is quite likely that we would see the same difference in behavior. Jimmy is an active baby who responds quickly and strongly to any sort of stimulation whether it be light, touch, or heat. Billy, on the other hand, is more quiet, moves less, reacts more slowly and less intensely to such stimulation. In short we have witnessed characteristic ways of behaving that will make Jimmy and Billy different kinds of people all their lives.

If we define personality as the consistent, patterned way in which an individual responds to life situations, then it is clear that an individual's pattern is determined in part at least by the ways in which his body is capable of acting. This is the constitutional factor in personality. No one knows, even now, exactly how much influence it has on the eventual outcome, the adult personality. Mary Shirley's studies of new-born infants show that there are such clear differences among children, and that they are related to activity patterns in the parents; but beyond this it has not been clearly demonstrated how far such qualities are permanent and unchangeable.<sup>1</sup> Sheldon has attempted to relate personality-types to body build.<sup>2</sup> He believes that thin people, to use an over-simplified example,

<sup>1</sup> Shirley, M. M. *The First Two Years*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1931.

<sup>2</sup> Sheldon, W. H. *Varieties of Temperament*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1942.

behave in ways that are quite different from those that characterize short, stout people. Such studies have not been conclusive, but continuing research is important. If we could determine what tendencies present at birth will continue for life, and which ones can be modified, we would know better where to concentrate our training efforts.

However, despite such possible constitutional factors, the evidence seems clear that the child's experience as he grows up among other human beings is the most important set of influences that shape his personality. Such experiences can even reverse action-patterns that are shown in the early months of life. An excellent film, *The Life History of Mary*, illustrates this.

At birth, and during the first year or two, Mary, an active child, mastered the world around her alertly, with interest and with superior physical and intellectual ability. Mary's father wanted a child, but her mother, a tense, neurotic woman, preferred a career. She was unhappy at having a girl, and having to cater to the demands of a normal baby. In the film, her feelings are evident from the way she holds and nurses and handles the child. Even in the second year, while Mary is physically and emotionally precocious, she seldom enjoys her achievements.

As the years pass, we see Mary becoming less spontaneous and outstanding, as she interacts with her parents.

By five years of age, Mary is no longer active and outgoing. She is a shy, anxious, neurotic little girl, who is afraid to make any move without first waiting to see if it is approved. At two years she took the initiative at meeting and interacting with other children. By six, she is no longer able to do this. She has little relation with children and is no longer sure how to behave in any situation, because of a psycho-neurosis.

Thus, we see a child, constitutionally superior, developing in response to the accumulating weight of experience and training into a child of mediocrity, due to a psycho-neurosis with compulsive trends.<sup>3</sup>

The story told by this film is merely one vivid example of many that might be chosen. It leads to a conclusion that most clinicians, anthropologists, and other social scientists have found reasonable: that what we call personality is largely learned in association with the other people.

The same conclusion was reached in a study by Goldfarb.<sup>4</sup> He chose two groups of children. One consisted of children who had been placed in an institution at an average age of 4.5 months, lived there about three years, and were then transferred to foster homes. The others were children who lived in their own homes for about a year and were then placed in foster homes. Following them through the years,

<sup>3</sup> *Life History of Mary from Birth to Seven Years*. 4 reels, silent. New York University Film Library. (Available through many film libraries.)

<sup>4</sup> Goldfarb, W. "The Effects of Early Institutional Care on Adolescent Personality." *Journal Experimental Education* 12:2; December 1943.

he found that the children who had spent their early years in institutions were strikingly different from the children who had been in a family throughout their lives. During childhood the institutional children were seen to be shy, anxious, unable to make friendly relations with other children. By contrast the foster home children were an average group of reasonably secure, sociable children who got along with others in normal fashion. Even fourteen years later, when both groups of children were adolescents, the same differences could be observed.

The main conclusion that Goldfarb drew was that the institutional children, not experiencing close personal contacts with adults in the first few years of life, were thereafter unable to overcome the unloved, unloving, and insecure attitudes that they learned in the first few years. The other group, even though they were raised in foster homes, seemed to show enduring capacity to relate to people.

Such research confirms the observation that most of personality is learned. There may be certain behavioral tendencies that are inherited, but in general it seems that human beings are *made* what they are and are not born that way. This means that the home environment in which the child grows up is the decisive factor determining what kind of person he will be as an adult. It even appears that the major traits and behavior patterns are determined in the first few years of life. This is not to say that important relearning or changes do not occur, but that they take place within the framework of attitudes and habitual reactions laid down in the first five or six years.

### The Nature of the Child

There are certain basic impulses or drives which appear to be common to all children no matter in what part of the world they are born. They must learn to express and satisfy such impulses in ways that are acceptable to their particular society. There are children of course, who, at first observation, do not seem to show certain of these needs; yet closer examination usually reveals that they have the needs but are afraid or ashamed to act on them. These are children who usually are not functioning normally in personal or social behavior. The following paragraphs describe the basic impulses which seem to be common to all children.

#### Finding Out What the World Is Like

The human child is naturally curious. He creeps as soon as he can and later learns to walk and to run. From early infancy he handles things, he tastes things, he looks at them. He explores his world in all the ways in which he is physically capable. All these behaviors are expressions of his need to understand the world around him and to under-

stand his place in it. This is one of the fundamental reasons why children learn in school.

### Learning To Deal with the World

It is vital for the child to master the physical and technical skills that are current in his society. This results partly from an organic need to meet life successfully and to master the physical world for the sake of sheer survival. Partly it also seems true that all societies demand some kind of productive achievement from the individual if he is to be accepted as a worthwhile member, and the child must learn certain specific skills in order to achieve social usefulness.

### Relating Emotionally to Other People

One of the unique things about human beings is that they need each other. The human infant or young child is literally incapable of caring for himself for a period of several years. Whether a child learns from this experience the necessity of relating to others, or whether it is an inborn need, the result is beyond doubt. It is essential that the child have satisfying, secure emotional relations with other people, chiefly adults, if he is to become a healthy, whole person. Success or failure in this respect in childhood appears to spell the difference between emotional and social maturity and character or personality disorders.

### Expressing One's Needs and Taking Assertive Action To Defend Them

Aggressive self-assertion and self-defense seem to be normal reactions of the human organism. Each society has its own ways of channeling this aggressive activity, but this normal tendency cannot be disposed of by denying its presence or by trying to uproot it.

*Alike, but different.*

*Atlanta, Georgia, Public Schools*





This poses one of the major problems of our own society. Too often when a child becomes hostile because of the way he has been treated, this hostility is regarded as an evil, unnatural reaction. On the contrary, it is the most natural feeling in the world. Of course, the child cannot be allowed to attack and injure others, but the only successful solution is to locate and remove the cause for the hostility. In most cases, it is possible to show the child that his hostile reaction is natural, but that there are more constructive ways of finding satisfaction. The important principle to recognize here is that aggressive feelings are natural and normal and do no harm in themselves. The child can be taught to act in constructive rather than destructive ways—and without making him feel that he is a bad person because he has aggressive impulses.

### **Satisfying Organic and Social Sexual Needs**

This, too, is a natural impulse based on the biology of the human organism, and this, too, can be directed into socially valuable channels, but cannot be legislated out of existence. The young child is not, of course, sexually active in the same way as an adult. However, his normal impulse is to enjoy sensual stimulation. This is the foundation for later healthy sexual activity in adult years. It is no more possible for the growing child to be asexual than it is for him to stop breathing. What society must do is to define the ways of satisfying these needs which it will approve and to provide socially constructive outlets.

In our own society, our official code permits no sexuality at all until the "magic moment" of marriage. Unofficially, most Americans are sexually active anyway, but with crippling feelings of shame or guilt. People who "succeed" in totally repressing their sexual needs are usually not too well off in terms of mental health.

### **Learning To Express and Control One's Impulses**

When we think about a man's personality we usually think about the way he feels toward other people, and the way he acts toward them. We also consider the way he feels about and handles his family and professional responsibilities. Further, we ask if he is happy, secure, well-controlled; or tense and irritable; or cold and tightly controlled; or warm and impulsive. These are all patterns of feeling and acting that are learned in childhood.

The growing child is constantly dealing with two sets of forces. One is his own set of impulses, needs, and wishes. The other is the pattern of demands that his family and his society make upon him. A child who acted entirely on impulse would not be a human being in the full sense of the word. He would show neither the desire nor the ability to fit his own needs into those of the people around him. We always have a few such individuals and sometimes refer to them as psychopathic personalities. On the



other hand, a child who faithfully reflected only the demands and rigorous training of the people around him would be without initiative, without self-respect, and indeed almost without a "self." Happily for most children, the choice is not one of either extreme, but of finding a middle-road between them.

To become a human being is to become a social being. It requires that a child learn to satisfy his own needs, but at the same time, to do so in ways that are acceptable and helpful to those around him. What we think of as personality, then, is the characteristic way a human individual satisfies his own needs, and the degree to which his behavior is satisfying to others. The problem, therefore, for a growing child is not to learn to "control" his impulses, so much as it is learning to *express* them in personally and socially constructive ways.

In school children one can observe the differences that are visible among adults. The child who is withdrawn, unfriendly, unable to understand or appreciate other persons' feelings; the warm, impulsive, friendly child who may be thoughtless, but is well-liked; the demure, "proper" child who tries to do the "right thing"—these are some of the types to be found in any classroom.

A seventh-grade teacher reported a thoroughly spontaneous, impulsive boy, as follows:

*The child's relationships with parents are crucial in developing personality.*

*Federal Works Agency*



Fire drill at second period today (math class). After the students were lined up in their assigned place, I walked back along the line and found Jack kneeling in his place in line, with his hands together as if in prayer. He was mumbling sounds very rapidly. When I stopped at his side, he cocked his eye up to me, and when I said, "Get up, Jack," he answered, "I'm prayin', Miss Roberts."

"Well, Jack, praying on the street like that isn't good manners; so please get up." He did, then.

Coming in to the building a few minutes later, I heard him say to his friend Larry, "Gotta go back to the ol' math class. Guess I didn't pray hard enough."

Another seventh-grade teacher reports:

Paul came in ten minutes early this morning. He was quiet, as usual; sat down at his desk, took out his geography book, and started to work on the next assignment.

Henry, Pete, and Norman came bursting into the room a few minutes later, with loud exclamations of, "Miss Nelson, look at this!" Pete had a glass jar full of water with a small catfish in it. He put it on the worktable by the window, and the three boys bent over it, in noisy absorption.

I noticed that Paul watched them from the time they came in, but it was several minutes before he got up and slowly walked over to them. He moved around the edge of the group for several minutes. He tried to get a look at the jar, but said nothing. Harry looked around once when Paul brushed his elbow, but turned his attention to the fish again, ignoring Paul.

As other children came in, they rushed over to the table. There was a great deal of good-natured pushing to get in the middle and see the catfish. As happens frequently, Paul spoke to no one, and none of the children paid any attention to him. He finally drifted toward my desk, asked me a question about the arithmetic lesson, and walked slowly back to his seat. He sat down and went to work. During the time until the bell rang for class to start, however, he stole frequent glances at the crowd by the window.

It is reasonable to guess that the withdrawn child has parents who do not particularly love or like him, who may not have wanted him, and who do not show much affection, however responsibly they may carry out their formal duties as parents. It is also reasonable to guess that the warm, spontaneous child has parents who are loving and affectionate. Whatever the atmosphere in their families, by the time these children have started school they have already learned certain basic ways of seeking satisfaction. It is important to remember that they have learned behavior patterns which they saw, or which were acceptable, in their family circles. The cold, distant child has doubtless made the best adjustment possible for him in terms of his own perception of his world, whether or not an outside observer would consider it very satisfactory.

By school age, children have already learned to expect and to want certain things from life. It is the way they try to get them that distinguishes them as persons one from another. One useful way of understanding and describing children is to observe how they seek to satisfy their major needs and wishes. There are several possible ways, each of which has its own peculiar rewards and disadvantages.

### **Direct Action**

This is the impulsive, spontaneous attempt which young children normally use to get what they want in the shortest way possible. In moderate doses, this is a refreshing quality; but it sometimes involves too little concern for others to be socially tolerable for long.

June is a lively member of our kindergarten class. She skips quickly from one part of the room to another, often singing at the top of her lungs. This morning, she apparently decided she wanted to play with the big wooden airplane. Tommy was riding on it, but she pushed him off, and rolled gaily down the room. Tommy started to cry, but June ignored him as she went off, singing a song she made up as she went, "I'm flying 'way up in the air. I'm flying 'way up high."

### **Adapted Action**

The child soon learns in the first and second years of his life that he cannot always eat when he wants to, that he must learn to control his excretory functions to suit the convenience of others in his family, and that in almost every activity he must consider the wishes and rights of those about him. The well-socialized child learns to satisfy his own needs in ways that are acceptable to his family, to his teachers, and later to his peer group.

This may often require delaying action until a suitable time, but it does not require that his needs be denied or go unsatisfied. The child who is lucky enough to learn "adapted" action patterns has adequate outlets for his needs, although they may not be the outlets he would choose spontaneously, or at first thought. Most kindergarten children, for example, soon learn that they cannot express frustrations and anger by breaking toys. But in a well-planned classroom, they learn to get rid of their tensions by pounding on the peg board, by kicking a ball around in the yard, or by other ways which permit release of feeling without social damage.

Helen was very unhappy today because she was not chosen to be the heroine in our second-grade play. For about five minutes she teased me and plucked at my skirt, "Please, Miss Kramer, why can't I be 'Mistress Mary'?" For awhile, she paid no attention to my suggestion that she try being the bluebird, which was her part.

Finally, however, she stopped, and walked over to look at the picture of the people and animals in the play. The next thing I knew, she was flitting happily about the room, waving her arms, and crying,

"Look at me, I'm a bluebird." Neither she nor the other children were at all bothered that she was actually wearing a bright yellow dress. From then on, she was the bluebird.

### Indirect Action

The main feature of this third kind of behavior is that the child does not feel entirely free to reveal or even to recognize what it is that he wants. This is the repressive "solution." Probably because he has been trained to think of them as bad, a child is unable to accept the fact that he has certain impulses or needs. The little girl who has been taught that she must always be sweet and friendly may thus be unable to recognize moments when she feels angry, even though she may be justified in feeling so. The difficulty with trying to deny one's feelings and needs is that they are still present. Though such a little girl may be unable to express hostility spontaneously and directly, she is apt to resort to disguised and indirect ways of releasing her antagonism. Sooner or later even the children around her will recognize that her sweet replies may mask a subtle but sharp edge.

The trouble with such behavior is not that it is deliberately insincere, for often it is not. It involves feelings and social effects of which the girl herself is unaware. Since the child cannot recognize what she is doing, she cannot alter or control such behavior. This is the general reason why repression of an impulse is unsatisfactory both to the individual and to the people around her. The more strongly an urge is denied, the more likely it is to appear in some disguised form—a form which neither gives the individual satisfaction, nor gives expression to the original impulse.

That even a "grown-up" can fall into this trap is testified by the following:

Things were in an awful state when I got in. The substitute had undertaken to find out who, if anyone, had Beatrice's dime. Some of the children were frightened and some were angry, and no child was acting like himself. When the children were finally quiet and dismissed, and a somewhat dampened Beatrice clutched the dime she had finally found in the hem of her own coat, I talked to the substitute about her way of handling the situation. "I don't care. I don't care one little bit what you think. A thief is a thief, and that's that." Her flushed face and sullen eyes spoke over her words to indicate how much she cared, but there was no use to press the issue, for she was too upset to know whether it was thievery, insecurity, or hurt pride, about which she was caring so visibly.<sup>5</sup>

Such attempted solutions of the problem of adapting impulse to social requirements, if carried to extremes, are what we term "neurotic." Children

<sup>5</sup> Rasey, Marie I. *Toward Maturity: The Psychology of Child Development*. New York: Hinds, Hayden and Eldridge, 1947. p. 109.

who have learned to use such methods always build up some kind of unrealistic and tense defense. Their defenses serve to reassure themselves that they do not really have the "bad" impulses that they actually feel. The third grader who receives no valentines from the box when they are distributed may resort to the "sour grapes" type of rationalization. "I don't care anyway" is an understandable and transparent attempt to deny the existence of the problem.

This is precisely the danger in rationalization or any other type of "defense mechanism." They are all aimed at proving that the problem isn't there. This prevents any realistic, active attack on the problem which could lead to satisfactory solution. There is a variety of such defenses, including projection of blame onto other people, daydreaming instead of facing life problems, and becoming physically ill instead of getting rid of emotional tension.

I noticed Jay watching the clock and trying out cautiously a curious little cough. It was curious to watch him convince himself. By the end of the study period he looked worn and weary, and sounded really ill. It was so convincing that, if I hadn't seen it grow, I should have let him go home and miss the hated music class.<sup>6</sup>

In their more serious forms, such unrealistic attempts to deal with life may lead to deep-seated emotional detachment which leaves the child unable to relate to children or older people in a satisfying way. A child who shows no feelings at all may be quiet and may present no classroom problem, but he may be in most serious need of help.

### The Child's Picture of Himself

Reasoning from the foregoing, one could arrive at the same conclusion that has been found in much recent research. The child, and the adult for that matter, reacts to the world not "as it is," but as he thinks it is. Similarly he feels happy or unhappy with himself not "as he is" to others, but as he sees himself. The lonely child whose defensive antagonism keeps other children from giving him valentines finds it vitally necessary to convince himself that other people don't matter. Picturing himself as an isolated, self-contained person, he is apt to behave in ways consistent with this picture. The fact that he desperately needs affection from others is precisely the thing that he cannot accept in himself. It is not surprising if he continues to be withdrawn and antagonistic and to reject any direct attempt to show him that he does need people. Such defensive mechanisms are no more than symptoms of the underlying difficulty. Any attempt to remove or reduce the symptoms is doomed to defeat from the onset.

<sup>6</sup> Rasey, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

Since the child quite unconsciously builds up his picture of the world and of himself from the way he is treated at home and elsewhere, the only convincing way to teach him that he need not be defensive is to treat him differently without making an open issue of the problem. Only consistently positive, friendly, honest treatment by adults will help an insecure, anxious, or antagonistic child to learn that human relationships can be satisfying, and that there are more direct and constructive ways of satisfying his needs than the disguised methods he has learned previously.

The child's eyes followed my every movement with a kind of surface curiosity contradicted by the apathetic slump of his trunk as he sat. His feet were braced one behind the other in the best possible position to spring into flight if occasion demanded. As I approached him, his glance fixed on me steadily, his left hand went back on the chair to give him the best possible thrust if he decided to run, and he took a fleeting glance at the door. This was no boy I was called upon to deal with, but a young animal who had learned how to fend for himself when punishment threatened and to make the most of any avenue of escape. There was no use trying to touch the misdemeanor until we got clear of at least three misconceptions: my office was no cage, he was no animal, and I no animal trainer.<sup>7</sup>

### Life in the School

Knowing that the child "learns" his personality through his interaction with other human beings, and knowing that differences between people are the rule and are inevitable, whether they stem from differences in constitution or environment, certain principles can be applied in working with children.

*One:* Help children learn to respect and enjoy different kinds of people. There is no one ideal mold in any society, and children cannot be forced into one mold without doing damage both to the child and to society. In a way, this is simply a restatement of one of the principles of our democracy: that there is room for different opinions and for different constructive aims in life.

*Two:* Recognize that children are trying to satisfy their natural human needs in all they do. However inadequate or undesirable their behavior may seem, it is the best solution they have been able to find on the basis of their previous experience.

*Three:* If a child presents a problem in his personal behavior, look for the real cause. Don't spend all the time trying to modify or remove the symptoms. While they are socially undesirable and cannot be permitted to continue, even stealing and lying are usually symptoms of deeper

<sup>7</sup> Rasey, *op. cit.*, p. 111.



disturbance. They can only be removed by helping the child find more satisfactory ways of meeting his needs.

Similarly, to punish a daydreamer is only to reinforce his conviction that the world around him is an unpleasant, unkind, and unrewarding place. What he needs is warmth and friendly acceptance to convince him that it is worthwhile devoting effort to socially required tasks.

*Four:* Distinguish between *socially disturbing* children and *internally disturbed* children. The active, disturbing child can certainly be a problem for the teacher, but he may or may not be moving toward a satisfactory life adjustment. Some "problem children" grow up to be successful, worthwhile adults. Others do not, and need sympathetic attention.

Some *disturbed* children are active behavior problems, but many are outwardly quiet and "well behaved." For the latter group, perhaps the most obvious way their troubles are manifested is in their inadequate relations to other children. A child who cannot get along with his teachers may require attention, but a child who cannot get along with other children is apt to be in even greater need of help.

*Five:* Remember that social behavior is a major clue to emotional adjustment. The child who is withdrawn from everyone, or hostile toward everyone, or who tries desperately for acceptance but meets only dislike—such a child is not only in trouble with his world but probably in conflict with himself.

*Six:* Remember that academic performance is also strongly affected by emotional adjustment. The intelligence a child demonstrates in his daily performance may be much lower than his potential capacity. There is a wealth of evidence that anxiety, depression, or other emotional conflict interferes markedly with intellectual functioning. Many so-called "sub-normal" children have been found to have adequate intellectual capacity when they have been emotionally rehabilitated. This is not a question of "raising the I.Q." by somehow improving the child's native capacity. It is simply a matter of freeing the child from confusing tensions so that he can make use of what potentialities he has.

### Summary

What we call personality or the "self" is the pattern of behavior, feelings, and attitudes which the child learns as he grows up in his family, his neighborhood, and his society. Parental attitudes have a basic influence in determining how the child will perceive himself and the world. His views of himself and the world will determine how he behaves and what methods he will use in trying to satisfy his needs and impulses. There are certain basic needs common to all children which can be channeled into socially



productive activity but which cannot be suppressed. Since the long, slow process of personality development is one of reconciling these individual human needs with the requirements of social living, children come to accept society's demands only through experiences which give them adequate personal satisfaction and through relations with people who accept and love the raw stuff of human nature as it is found in children.

## CHAPTER SIX

# Developmental Tasks:

## I. The Concept and Its Importance

CAROLINE TRYON AND JESSE W. LILIENTHAL III

**I**F LONG-RANGE development rather than specific learnings is regarded as the major emphasis in educating our children, then we must first understand the developmental process. We must first ask, How do children grow and develop? What is the general outline or configuration of the growth process? Through what steps or stages does the child go on his way to healthy adulthood? Only then are we prepared for the next questions, What can we do to help children? How shall we foster mental health and normal development?

### The Meaning of "Developmental Tasks"

There are certain guideposts which are helpful in gaining an over-all picture of growth and development. These guideposts we call "developmental tasks." The concept of developmental tasks provides a framework within which we can organize our knowledge about human behavior and learn to apply this information in dealing with children in our schools.

As an individual proceeds from birth to death, there are certain "tasks"—certain learnings, adjustments, achievements—which he must master if he is to make normal progress. Developmental tasks are those major common tasks that face all individuals within a given society or sub-group of society. While the concept applies equally to adulthood and old age, we shall confine ourselves in this chapter to the developmental tasks of infancy, childhood, and adolescence. Getting a new tooth we would not think of as a developmental task; but learning to eat solid foods at a prescribed time of the day with prescribed implements, as most children in American middle-class do at an early age, would be such a task. Helping to create and belong to an independent peer group society is an important developmental task of later childhood. Reorganizing one's thoughts and feelings about

one's self in the face of significant bodily changes and accepting the reality of one's appearance are tasks of early adolescence.<sup>1</sup>

### Some Characteristics of Developmental Tasks

There are two major areas of force which interact to set these tasks. The first are the expectancies and pressures of society, the "cultural patterns."<sup>2</sup> The second are the changes that take place in the physical organism through the processes of maturation.

The social or cultural expectancies should not be thought of as something remote or mystic; they are what the child's family, his teacher, his Sunday school teacher, his scout master, his peer group are trying to get him to do and to be.<sup>3</sup> In general these imply to the child that "you must change" to be approved, to be accepted, to belong.

While these expectancies have broad general lines, there will be variations on the same themes for different children, since no two families, no two teachers, no two leaders are exactly alike. Further, some of those expectancies will vary with the sub-group in our society to which the child's family belongs. For example, many of the children in the most underprivileged homes (lower-lower class), though they do learn to eat solid foods (when there is food in the house!), do not learn the middle-class ritual of a time for meals when one uses first a spoon and then a fork and knife. They eat when they are hungry, with their hands, often from a common pot or loaf.<sup>4</sup>

However, all of the tasks discussed in detail in this chapter we regard as tasks faced by all children in American society, recognizing that different ethnic, social class, and racial backgrounds will create variations.

For every child there is probably a period in his physical growth cycle for maximum accomplishment of any given developmental task. This means that the child is physically and emotionally ready for the task at a certain time. In fact, for a number of tasks the readiness and demands of

<sup>1</sup> Havighurst, Robert J. *Developmental Tasks and Education*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948. p. 86. This pamphlet gives a brief history of the concept of developmental tasks and presents a slightly different formulation than the one given here. The reader is advised to read both formulations, since this is an emerging concept that is likely to undergo changes during the next decade as further research and application progress.

<sup>2</sup> Plant, James S. *Personality and the Cultural Pattern*. New York: The Commonwealth Fund, 1937.

Benedict, Ruth. *Patterns of Culture*. New York: Penguin Books, Inc., 1934.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter Two, "Children Bring Their Families to School," and Chapter Three, "Children Teach Each Other."

<sup>4</sup> Davis, Allison, and Dollard, John. *Children of Bondage*. Washington: American Council on Education, 1940.

Davis, Allison, and Havighurst, Robert. *Father of the Man*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1947.

the body tend to take the lead in setting the task. For example, achieving independent locomotion in infancy and making a heterosexual social adjustment in early adolescence are tasks set primarily by the maturing body, although adults and peers in the child's environment prescribe certain ways in which these are to be done.

Americans in our generation, as in no other society past or present, have become slaves to chronological time. In turn, we put pressures on many of our children to achieve certain behaviors at a time when they are not ready. Usually these pressures are exerted too early, rather than too late. In any eighth-grade classroom where children of the same chronological age (born within the same calendar year) are grouped together, we would expect to find a physiological age range of six or seven years.<sup>5</sup> Where chronological age varies within a classroom, this physiological age range would be even greater. Some of the children would be in the stage of late childhood, others in early adolescence, others in late adolescence. Each of these stages has its own emotional and social readiness and its own developmental tasks. (see pages 84-87.) Since girls reach sexual maturity on the average about two years ahead of boys, there would be a tendency for the boys to be concerned with different tasks than those which concern the girls. Yet this varying group is together in the same classroom, where they are expected to achieve and to behave in much the same manner. Chronological age, then, as a basis for grouping children, often results in heterogeneity rather than homogeneity.

Another characteristic of developmental tasks is that they are inter-related in a complex fashion. Successful accomplishment of any task at the appropriate time not only facilitates mastery of other tasks which are being worked upon simultaneously, but such success creates readiness for succeeding tasks. Failure in dealing with a developmental task predisposes the individual to further failure.

It is for this reason that we shall discuss developmental tasks of infancy and early childhood, even though the teacher does not deal directly with these early years in her classrooms. The great majority of "children with problems" are children who have met with failure or only partial success in these common tasks of growing up. We are too prone to think of such problems as the result of some very disturbing, traumatic, or unique experience.

Typical of failure on a developmental task is a tendency for children (and adults) to continue to work, often ineffectively, upon their failures.

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter Four, "Body Processes Help To Determine Behavior and Development." See also: Stoltz, H. R.; Jones, Mary C.; and Chaffee, Judith, "The Junior High School Age." *University High School Journal* 14: 63-72; May 1941.

For example, there is the girl in third grade who continually seeks the teacher's help in putting on her snow suit, even though her manual dexterity is excellent; or who wants the teacher to help with her reading or arithmetic, even though her skills are superior. Such a child may still be struggling with the task of satisfying the dependency needs of infancy. Or the adult who continues to fight against authority figures, including the boss, may be the person who has not yet solved the task of early adolescence, that of freeing himself from emotional dependence on adults.

The life story of each individual will determine to a large degree the manner in which he approaches these tasks of growing up.<sup>6</sup> Some children will approach each developmental problem with vigor, assurance, and tenacity; others may withdraw, deny the existence of the problem, and hence fail.

Not only do most developmental tasks pose problems that have deep personal significance for every child, but many of them cause unnecessary emotional upset in the adults who are responsible for the child's rearing and education. Many of the behaviors which indicate that a child is working on one or another developmental task are regarded as "bad" or at best undesirable—aggression or defiance, peer cohesiveness with accompanying exclusion of adults, horseplay, restlessness and inattention, and disorder. Only when adults understand the causes of such behavior and understand that they are often the normal and expected behavior of children at various developmental stages can they be sympathetic and constructive in their relationships with children.

Another characteristic of developmental tasks is that none of the tasks is mastered in a day. Probably the minimum time for the accomplishment of almost any task would be six months; but many of these tasks pre-occupy the individual for several years, even when the individual is working very effectively upon them. The individual begins working at the task often—we might say usually—without being aware of what he is doing. In Chapter Three of this book, "Children Teach Each Other," we saw Don and his boy friends in the second grade busily forming a society of peers, a society with its own code of loyalty and fair play, and a society which was beginning to exclude adults. These second graders would probably have been unable to verbalize what they were doing. It would probably be the end of third grade or later before they would talk freely about their gang or their crowd, or before they would see it clearly as a highly organized social unit.

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter Five, "Individuality Develops." See also: Tryon, Caroline, and Henry, William E. "How Children Learn Personal and Social Adjustment." *Learning and Instruction*. Forty-Ninth Yearbook, Part I. National Society for the Study of Education. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949. Chapter Six.

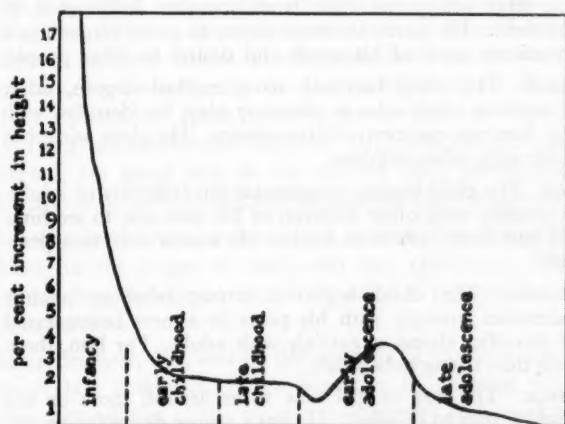
### Stages of Development

In the foregoing pages we have talked about "stages of development," and we have suggested that the "physiological age" is a much better indicator of a child's emotional readiness for certain experiences than any other single indicator we now have. Our use of the "stage of development" concept is in part based upon the physiological changes which occur in the human organism.

For example, Figure 1 is a schematic representation of the way in which the human body grows from birth to adulthood in terms of one physiological dimension, body height. The figure shows, not actual height from stage to stage, but increments of growth in height; the infant, for example, grows at a much faster rate than the child, and there is a spurt in height during early adolescence.

The five stages that are shown in Figure 1 will be used throughout this

FIGURE 1  
STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT IN RELATION  
TO CHANGES IN RATE OF GROWTH IN HEIGHT<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> A schematic curve adapted from Lois H. Meek, et al. The Personal-Social Development of Boys and Girls With Implications for Secondary Education. New York: Progressive Education Association, 1940, p. 34.

presentation. Briefly, these stages, in terms of rate of physical growth and concomitant physiological changes, are as follows:

1. *Infancy* is characterized by very rapid, but declining, rate of growth, together with instability of physiological processes.
2. *Early childhood* is a period when rate of growth and physiological processes are both becoming stabilized.
3. *Late childhood* is marked by stability in growth rate and stability of physiological processes.
4. *Early adolescence* is a period of rapidly increasing growth rate and increasing glandular activity which culminates in sexual maturity.
5. *Late adolescence* is characterized by a declining growth rate and the end of growth, and by stable (adult) body functioning.

In addition to physiological changes, we determine the stage of development for any child by observing the developmental tasks he is working on. The division of the growth period into five stages seems to have further validity in the sense that the developmental tasks at each stage have concurrency, are interrelated at the same period, and, if successfully resolved, bring the child to the threshold of a new series of tasks—a new stage of development.

These five stages will become more meaningful as the reader proceeds through this chapter and the next, but they may be described briefly in an introductory way, as follows:

*Infancy.* This stage brings the child from complete helplessness to partial independence. He learns to move about, to assert himself as a self, to communicate some of his needs and desires to other people.

*Early childhood.* The child becomes, to a marked degree, adult oriented. He explores adult roles in phantasy play, he identifies with adults, and he does not question adult authority. He plays with, but does not identify with, other children.

*Late childhood.* The child begins to recognize the fallibility of adults. He begins to identify with other children of his own sex, to see himself as a child and to see adults as adults. He moves over to a peer-centered society.

*Early adolescence.* The child begins a strong rebellion against adults. He identifies strongly with his peers in a new heterosexual grouping and identifies almost negatively with adults. For him, there is nothing worse than trying to be adult.

*Late adolescence.* The boy or girl now turns around more or less completely, and he tries to be adult. He has a strong desire for people to treat him like an adult.

We may attempt to characterize these five stages of development by giving the approximate chronological ages of each. We cannot emphasize too strongly, however, that the chronological ages at which each stage is reached will vary tremendously from individual to individual:



*Infancy:* Birth to the age of 2 or 3.

*Early childhood:* 2-3 to 5-6-7 years of age.

*Late childhood:* 5-6-7 to the beginning of the physical changes associated with pubescence (8-13 for girls; 10-15 for boys).

*Early adolescence:* Beginning of pubescence to puberty (the time when procreation becomes possible).

*Late adolescence:* Puberty to early maturity (anywhere from 15 to 23 years of age).

### Summary of Developmental Tasks

We are including in this chapter a summary of specific tasks according to stages of development and according to broad areas of behavior and adjustment. In the following chapter each task will be discussed in some detail.

In Table I the reader may read down each of the five columns to see what specific tasks are delineated for each of the five stages of development. He may read across in each of the ten categories to see what is the succession of tasks through the five stages for any one category of behavior and adjustment. The reader should keep in mind that these categories are merely one way of organizing the facts; there is nothing sacred or final about this grouping.

If a teacher studies this table for the developmental tasks of the children in the grade level she teaches, she will, with the possible exception of the kindergarten teacher, have to examine two or three of the columns. Practically all children at the kindergarten level are in the stage of early childhood. Occasionally, there will be a child who is already in the stage of later childhood. These would most probably be early maturing children from underprivileged families. In such families children are less protected, are given over to the care of older brothers and sisters, and hence are more likely to acquire the interests and the ways of older children.

Teachers at the first-, second-, and third-grade levels will be dealing with children in the stages of early and late childhood. The second-grade teacher is in a position to see the majority of her children move from one stage to the next.

In grades four, five, and six the majority of the boys will continue in the stage of late childhood, but a few may be entering the stage of early adolescence. A few of the girls in these grades will continue in the period of late childhood, but most of the girls will have entered the stage of early adolescence by the sixth grade—a few will be in early adolescence in the fourth grade, more in the fifth, and a majority in the sixth.

Classes at the junior-high-school level (seventh, eighth, and ninth grades) will include children who are at one or another of three stages of develop-

TABLE I.—THE TASKS OF FIVE STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT IN TEN CATEGORIES OF BEHAVIOR

	INFANCY	EARLY CHILDHOOD	LATE CHILDHOOD	EARLY ADOLESCENCE	LATE ADOLESCENCE
<b>I Achieving an Appropriate Dependence-Independence Pattern</b>	1. Establishing one's self as a very dependent being 2. Beginning the establishment of self-awareness	1. Adjusting to less private attention: becoming independent physically (while remaining strongly dependent emotionally)	1. Freeing one's self from primary identification with adults	1. Establishing one's independence from adults in all areas of behavior	1. Establishing one's self as an independent individual in an adult manner
<b>II Achieving an Appropriate Giving-Receiving Pattern of Affection</b>	1. Developing a feeling for affection	1. Developing the ability to give affection 2. Learning to share affection	1. Learning to give as much love as one receives; forming friendships with peers	1. Accepting one's self as a worthwhile person, really worthy of love	1. Building a strong mutual affectional bond with a (possible) marriage partner
<b>III Relating to Changing Social Groups</b>	1. Becoming aware of the alive as against the inanimate, and the familiar as against the unfamiliar 2. Developing rudimentary social-interaction	1. Beginning to develop the ability to interact with age-mates 2. Adjusting in the family to expectations it has for the child as a member of the social unit	1. Clarifying the adult world as over against the child's world 2. Establishing peer groupness and learning to belong	1. Behaving according to a shifting peer code	1. Adopting an adult-patterned set of social values by learning a new peer code

† We have not dealt here with the developmental tasks of relating to "secondary" social groups. As the child grows and develops, he must relate to groups other than the family and his peers—to school, community, nation, world. There are not yet sufficient data to delineate the specific developmental tasks in this area.

	INFANCY	EARLY CHILDHOOD	LATE CHILDHOOD	EARLY ADOLESCENCE	LATE ADOLESCENCE
<b>IV Developing a Conscience</b>	1. Beginning to adjust to the ex- pectations of others	1. Developing the ability to take di- rections and to be obedient in the presence of authority  2. Developing the ability to be obedi- ent in the absence of authority where conscience substi- tutes for authority	1. Learning more rules and develop- ing true morality		1. Learning to ver- balize contradic- tions in moral codes, as well as discrepancies be- tween principle and practice, and resolving these problems in a re- sponsible manner

<b>V Learning One's Psycho-Socio- Biological Sex Role</b>	1. Learning to identify with male adult and female adult roles	1. Beginning to identify with one's social contempo- raries of the same sex	1. Strong identi- fication with one's own sex mates  2. Learning one's role in hetero- sexual relationships	1. Exploring pos- sibilities for a future mate and acquiring "desira- bility"  2. Choosing an occupation  3. Preparing to ac- cept one's future role in manhood or womanhood as a responsible citizen of the larger com- munity
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TABLE I.—THE TASKS OF FIVE STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT IN TEN CATEGORIES OF BEHAVIOR (Continued)

	INFANCY	EARLY CHILDHOOD	LATE CHILDHOOD	EARLY ADOLESCENCE	LATE ADOLESCENCE
<b>VI Accepting and Adjusting to a Changing Body</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Adjusting to adult feeding demands</li> <li>2. Adjusting to adult cleanliness demands</li> <li>3. Adjusting to adult attitudes toward genital manipulation</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Adjusting to expectations resulting from one's improving muscular abilities</li> <li>2. Developing sex modesty</li> </ol>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reorganizing one's thoughts and feelings about one's self in the face of significant bodily changes and their concomitants</li> <li>2. Accepting the reality of one's appearance</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Learning appropriate outlets for sexual drives</li> </ol>
<b>VII Managing a Changing Body and Learning New Motor Patterns</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Developing physiological equilibrium</li> <li>2. Developing eye-hand coordination</li> <li>3. Establishing satisfactory rhythms of rest and activity</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Developing large muscle control</li> <li>2. Learning to coordinate large muscles and small muscles</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Refining and elaborating skill in the use of small muscles</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Controlling and using a "new" body</li> </ol>	
<b>VIII Learning to Understand and Control the Physical World</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Exploring the physical world</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Meeting adult expectations for restrictive exploration and manipulation of an expanding environment</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Learning more realistic ways of studying and controlling the physical world</li> </ol>		

	INFANCY	EARLY CHILDHOOD	LATE CHILDHOOD	EARLY ADOLESCENCE	LATE ADOLESCENCE
<b>IX Developing an Appropriate Symbol System and Conceptual Abilities</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Developing pre-verbal communication</li> <li>2. Developing verbal communication</li> <li>3. Rudimentary concept formation</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improving one's use of the symbol system</li> <li>2. Enormous elaboration of the concept pattern</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Learning to use language actually to exchange ideas or to influence one's hearers</li> <li>2. Beginning understanding of real causal relations</li> <li>3. Making finer conceptual distinctions and thinking reflectively</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Using language to express and to clarify more complex concepts</li> <li>2. Moving from the concrete to the abstract and applying general principles to the particular</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Achieving the level of reasoning of which one is capable</li> </ol>
<b>X Relating One's Self to the Cosmos</b>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Developing a genuine, though uncritical, notion about one's place in the cosmos</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Developing a scientific approach</li> </ol>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Formulating a workable belief and value system</li> </ol>



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***What experiences should each child have?***

ment, late childhood, early adolescence, and late adolescence. By the end of the ninth grade a majority of the girls will be entering late adolescence; only a few of the boys will have completed early adolescence.

At the senior-high-school level—grades ten through twelve—nearly all girls will be in the stage of late adolescence; the majority of the boys will move from early to late adolescence.

**Importance of the Concept of Developmental Tasks**

Let us dream for a minute. Suppose we could gather all tables of age norms and grade norms; could gather up all armchair curriculums with the "logical" and "historical" sequences; could then store these in a vault for twenty-five years so no one, particularly teachers and parents, could see them. We might toss in on top of that heap some of our biases—that the dirty, smelly child is likely to be stupid; that the docile, compliant child is well adjusted; that the child who behaves like an adult is the mature child. Then let us face the thirty or forty children in our classroom and ask ourselves: What kinds of experiences does each child need to have, as a thinking-feeling-doing person, to take his next steps in growing up in a democratic society? Certainly, if we could answer this question, the broad curriculum (all the child's experiences in school) would change, and change radically, in the majority of our schools. Many parents, too, would cease their striving, would be relieved of anxieties about their child's "failures," or might question their satisfactions about their child's "precociousness."

We are not, however, suggesting such a drastic move. It would create pandemonium.

On the other hand, the concept of developmental tasks does really present a challenge that is akin to the drastic plan of our "dream." We are not presenting this concept and the array of formulations about specific developmental tasks presented in the next chapter because it might be useful to some teacher about some child at some time. Rather, we present them because we believe they are the most important single consideration in building a good curriculum and in formulating school policies and procedures. Once we understand the stages of development through which children pass, and the tasks concomitant with each stage of development, then we can rebuild a system of education which will maximize the healthy growth and integration of emotional, social, and intellectual aspects of each child—a system of education which will foster mental health.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

# Developmental Tasks:

## II. Discussion of Specific Tasks and Implications

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IN THIS CHAPTER each of the tasks listed in Table I in the preceding chapter will be discussed in more detail. The discussion will be by categories of behavior and adjustment rather than by stages of development.

There are several reasons for this order of discussion. In the first place, people who have heard a lecture or two on developmental tasks may say, "Oh, yes, one of the tasks is making a social adjustment to one's peers." They have overlooked the fact that a task presents very different problems at different stages of development, that "adjusting to peers" in late childhood is a very different thing from "adjusting to peers" in early adolescence.

In the second place, the teacher who year after year teaches the same grade level must bear in mind the whole sweep of development if she is going to help children prepare for later tasks. For example, the docile, conforming child in the first grade may become so fixated in this pattern that he cannot face up to some of the tasks of late childhood and early adolescence, many of which require considerable assertion and aggression.

The extended discussion of these developmental tasks presented here should be thought of as data for study by teachers or groups of teachers who are concerned with curriculum and mental health.

### I. Achieving an Appropriate Dependence-Independence Pattern

#### Infancy

1. *Establishing one's self as a very dependent being.* From the moment of birth throughout the period of infancy the human organism is in a very real sense dependent on other human beings for the maintenance of life

itself. Without his mother's care the infant would not long survive. He depends on his mother not only for the necessities of food and warmth, but also for his general physical comfort. Because of his immaturity he would be uncomfortable a great deal of the time if mother were not on hand to pick him up, change his diapers, wash him, and administer to him in countless ways many times a day.

The infant gradually becomes aware of the fact of his own dependency. He finds that when he awakens and feels uncomfortable he cannot automatically restore pleasant sensations himself; so he twists and turns, and probably cries, until he draws outside attention to himself. He learns that it is not until mother appears with nourishment and understanding care that he is made comfortable again.

A baby comes to feel completely dependent, then, and it is most unlikely that any child was ever "spoiled" at this stage of development. It is because he has someone on whom he can always depend that he develops his first feelings of security. Since mother comes when he cries, he is *permitted* to establish himself as a very dependent being. He begins to feel secure in this extremely confusing world to which he has been so recently exposed.

These early feelings of security are essential for the child's future healthy development. A baby who fails in this task may, for example, become aggressive toward others, or he may withdraw into himself.

2. *Beginning the establishment of self-awareness.* At first the infant does not distinguish between himself and his surroundings; he feels part and parcel of everything around him. But soon, provided he is progressing satisfactorily with the first task, he undertakes an additional job of establishing himself as an individual being. He starts to explore himself, to find that he has toes and fingers which he can move at will. He discovers, at the same time, that his bedclothes are not a part of him, and that he is a different "being" from his mother. He gradually realizes that he is something separate and apart from the world about him. He begins to become oriented in the world as a self.

Then he learns to walk; this results in an enlarging of his world. He comes in contact with many more objects to explore, and his exploration leads to further vital differentiation of himself as a separate being. He finds out that "this is this," "that is that," "you are you," and most important of all that "I am 'me.'" He will never progress and achieve real independence unless he accomplishes this task satisfactorily.

### Early Childhood

1. *Adjusting to less private attention: becoming independent physically (while remaining strongly dependent emotionally).* The birth of a brother or sister very frequently forces the child to relinquish his position in the center of

the family stage. No longer is the mother able to concentrate her attention on him alone. Even if no new members are added to the family circle, he learns that he must "share" his mother with his father or possibly older brothers and sisters or others in the home. The child is inevitably confronted with this new situation when he starts to school. Now he finds himself in a less personal environment, in the midst of many little boys and girls, very much like himself, who here have only one "mother"—the teacher. The child is confronted with the difficult task of learning to get along in the new and challenging situation in which there are competitors for the attentions and ministrations of "his" adult.

If he has not been able to develop early feelings of security as a dependent being, he is now likely to fight for the adult's attention in many devious ways. For example, he may develop temper tantrums; or he may regress to an earlier stage in which he continuously wets himself; or he may refuse to eat unless he is fed. He will make dependency demands upon the teacher. On the other hand, the child who has developed early feelings of security goes to work on the developmental task in a direct fashion. He is not overly concerned about gaining adult attention, but instead he can concentrate on learning the daily routines of physical care that his bodily maturation will permit. He discovers the mysteries of buttons, zippers, and laces. He masters the signals his body gives him that the time for elimination is at hand, and he learns to conform to social demands related to personal habits of elimination. At the same time, he improves his ability to feed himself, and he learns the complex rules of physical safety. He may even begin to go to school alone. He begins to think of himself as "in the family," "at school," and so on. He is coming to consider himself a person who is capable of getting along on his own.

Nevertheless, even though he is striving for independence, he is essentially a very dependent person. He must work hard at the task; he uses an immense amount of energy, but he is incapable of progressing through it alone. He is desperately in need of adult support at all times. He cannot adjust to less private attention unless he is given an abundance of private attention, even if it is necessarily less than before.

### Late Childhood

1. *Freeing one's self from primary identification with adults.* While the young child is working on the preceding developmental task he is closely identified with adults. He has an unquestioning attitude toward authority, and does what he does essentially because "Mommie said," or "Teacher said." When he enters the period of late childhood a big step must be taken toward the achievement of an independent pattern of behavior. The child begins to realize that adults can be wrong. This realization probably comes as something of a shock to the child, but it is normally the basis

for working on this developmental task. As adult fallibility becomes more and more apparent, the identification with adults becomes less and less strong. Identification with one's age-mates begins to take its place.

The result is the beginning of a rift between adults and children. The child is coming to look on himself as a child and to look upon adults as adults. He begins to value the opinion of other children as much or even more than that of adults. The day of blind obedience to adult commands is passing.

This is the period of secrets. They seem to be mainly secrets-for-their-own-sake and are a fairly reliable indication that the child is working on this developmental task. He is asserting his importance as a child. He is saying: "I'm finding out that you grownups don't know everything, and we kids know plenty of things you don't know."

As he progresses with the job of freeing himself from blind faith in adults, he discovers that he, a child, actually has a right to discern alternatives and to make choices. He begins to recognize a threat to his freedom and translates it into a threat to himself as a person. However, to assert this right is no simple matter. He has lived quite a number of years in submission and obedience. He must exert special and considerable effort to alter old habits if he is eventually to achieve the independence we like to think of as the inheritance of all Americans.

If all goes as it should in his development, the child gradually begins to demand the right to make choices. Condemning him for being disobedient and rude may make him fight all the harder, but it may also make him give up, and the task may never be adequately worked through.

Wise teachers and parents are quick to recognize the child's growing desire to make choices; they help him by providing suitable opportunities. The difficult decisions of adolescence and maturity can be made much more easily if the child is given practice in making choices at this stage in his development.

### Early Adolescence

1. *Establishing one's independence from adults in all areas of behavior.* If boys and girls are going to get along in their peer world, which is the important world for them the rest of their lives, they have to attack this task with vim and vigor. The peer world is no place for mamma's baby.

The early adolescent, striving for independence, enters a period of very strong rebellion against adults. He must fight to free himself from his dependent ties to parents. And so he wants to go to bed when he sees fit, wants to go where he pleases when he pleases, and so on. He increases his independence by supplementing his allowance; he gets a paper route,

washes cars, mows lawns. He resents any adult interference with his plans, and he frequently avoids conflicts with parents by being away from home a large part of the time. His teachers will suffer too, even his most loved teachers.

Work on this developmental task seems inevitably to lead to contradictory and bizarre behavior. The early adolescent, neither child nor adult, is betwixt and between. In his confusion he acts as if the worst thing in the world is to be adult. He becomes actually "less adult" in much of his behavior than in the preceding stage of development. He is eager to become independent, but in many ways he feels himself inadequate. The truth of the matter is that he is still in need of adult support. He is neither competent enough nor emotionally mature enough to stand alone.

Probably no developmental task requires more understanding and patience on the part of parents and teachers than this one. It would seem to be best for the child's healthy development to try to accept him as he is and to allow him to work out his own problems—but we must be prepared for plenty of running back to our apron strings.

### Late Adolescence

1. *Establishing one's self as an independent individual in a mature way.* Provided the adolescent has successfully passed through all the previous developmental tasks in this area, he is now ready to take the final steps toward establishing himself as an autonomous individual. This is a period of reintegration following the general disintegration that characterized early adolescence. The late adolescent wants to be treated like an adult. He gives his attention to civic responsibilities. He is setting out on a serious exploration of possible life vocations as a means of assuring himself economic independence. Even his parties are directly patterned after those of adults.

The task is generally accompanied by a striking amnesia for childhood, a denial of having been a child. Overtly, he may, for example, hide the family photograph album at the slightest suggestion of its being shown to visitors. This denial of childhood is highly symbolic of the desire to be equal and independent. Usually, as the late adolescent becomes satisfied in this desire, as others accept him as an adult, he once again feels safe in meeting his parents and teachers on a more friendly, equalitarian basis. Teachers and parents, however, are not often ready to meet him on this new basis.

There are important differences in the way this task is defined for adolescents in the different social classes in America. Upper- and middle-class parents often exert pressure on their children to remain children. Boys and girls from so-called "better homes" frequently encounter considerable oppo-

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sition from their parents in their strivings for full independence; their fathers and mothers may want them to remain emotionally, socially, and economically within the family fold until they finish college. Such boys and girls frequently have a difficult time in working through this task. Lower-class parents, in quite contrary fashion, require their adolescent children to be independent financially as well as emotionally and socially. Lower-class adolescents are compelled to move through this task rapidly, and usually they "become adults" several years earlier than upper- and middle-class children.

## II. Achieving an Appropriate Giving-Receiving Pattern of Affection

### Infancy

1. *Developing a feeling for affection.* The mental health of an infant is directly related to whether or not he is loved. The way others feel toward him is reflected in the way he comes to feel toward himself, and eventually toward other people. When they do not show him affection, he may begin to feel that something is wrong with him.

The infant gets his first feelings of security by being handled gently and tenderly. The tone of the mother's voice is important, as is the nature of her physical contacts with the infant. This warm relationship with the mother is usually enlarged when the father enters the picture. Now there is the opportunity for the small human being to have his love related to two people instead of one.

Throughout life there should be a pattern of broadening affectional relationships. The danger lies in the possibility of development being stalled along its course. Thus, in infancy, the father may not enter the picture in

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*Late adolescents want to be treated like adults.*





a positive way; he may be seen only negatively, as a competitor for the mother's affection, rather than as a person who also gives love to the child.

This area of development is firmly rooted in infancy. The individual who was not himself loved in infancy will find it extremely hard ever to give love to anyone else.

### Early Childhood

1. *Developing the ability to give affection.* The infant is essentially the receiver in an affectional relationship. However, provided he has been given an abundance of love in infancy, he is now able to undertake the task of learning to give love to others. He begins to take pleasure in giving kisses and in expressing his love for mother and father in other ways. At the same time he is learning to widen his world of affectional relationships. Development continues from mother and father to include others; he learns to accept the affection of grandparents, aunts, uncles, teachers, and others, and to offer them his affection in return.

2. *Learning to share affection.* Just as the child has the task of learning to adjust to less private attention, he has also the task of learning to adjust to less love. If new siblings appear, he must share parental love with them. He must learn to share with other boys and girls the affections of his teacher.

Some jealousy is inevitable in the working out of this developmental task. A moderate amount of jealousy, however, if it can be gradually worked through, probably does more good than harm. It helps to teach the child how he will have to get along outside of the family circle.

### Late Childhood

1. *Learning to give as much love as one receives; forming friendships with peers.* If the child has progressed satisfactorily through the previous tasks in this area (in infancy he has learned to receive love, and in early childhood he has begun to learn to give love), he is now ready to perfect his ability to give affection. Affectional relationships now include animals as well as people, age-mates as well as adults, teachers and other outside adults as well as members of the family. The child at this stage of development is learning to strike a balance between giving and receiving in affectional relations. Successful work in this task is evidenced by the child's ability to form friendships with age-mates. Peers demand that friends give as much as they receive. A child who has not received sufficient love in infancy is now at a very serious disadvantage. To make friends on a basis of equality necessitates deep feelings of security such as can be formed only in infancy.



### Early Adolescence

1. *Accepting one's self as a worthwhile person, really worthy of love.* Largely because of dramatic physical changes and their concomitants, the early adolescent experiences a general bewilderment. Unable ever to feel much confidence in himself, he is likely at times to experience deep feelings of worthlessness. He need only to look in the mirror at his acned face and his gangling limbs to convince himself that he is completely odious. It is difficult for him to engage in any real giving-receiving affectional relationship. Therefore, before he can progress in this area of development, he has the job of "finding himself" once again. In a very real sense he has the task of learning to love his new self, as a prelude to the ability to exchange deep and lasting love with someone else.

The early adolescent becomes enormously egocentric; he becomes pre-occupied with himself. His friendships are unstable and are used to gain understanding of himself. He is likely to get "crushes" on teachers, other adults, or older adolescents in which a tremendous amount of affection is involved, but in which he gives very little real affection. His crushes, like his friendships, are a means of coming to terms with himself. In addition, his successful accomplishment of other developmental tasks of early adolescence helps him through this task.

He emerges more and more as a person acceptable to himself. He grows more self-confident and secure, more worthy of his own love, and accordingly, of the love of others. He finds himself to be a worthwhile human being after all. His egocentricity declines, and it is possible for him to move into the next stage of development.

### Late Adolescence

1. *Building a strong mutual affectional bond with a (possible) marriage partner.* The way this task is defined for each individual depends on what he has learned about love prior to this stage of development. Is securing the love of others more important to him than it should be? Does he feel that love can never be permanent? Has he had strong rivalry with brothers and sisters? Does he feel that one must fight for love? Has he learned to share love?

This developmental task is part of the process of the lifetime development of affection. The new heterosexual love relationship is strongly colored by the individual's previous love relationships. Successful completion of the developmental tasks in this area paves the way toward establishing a lasting and satisfying partnership in marriage, while any failure in this area creates an enormous obstacle to successful marriage.

### III. Relating to Changing Social Groups

#### Infancy

1. *Becoming aware of the alive as against the inanimate, and the familiar as against the unfamiliar.* Not only has the infant the task of distinguishing between himself and his surroundings, but he must also learn to differentiate between people and things. He finds, for example, that when he drops his rattle on the floor, he must wait until *somebody* picks it up for him; rattles do not return to him of their own accord. Then he begins to differentiate between these "somebodies," as between mother and father and an older sister. The members of the immediate family become very familiar to him. "They really help a fellow out, especially mother." His immediate family becomes the first social group in which he has a part.

He soon finds that strangers sometimes intrude upon his "primary" social group. He must learn to accept them, although he may continue to resent their presence.

2. *Developing rudimentary social interaction.* The infant is quick to learn the power of a smile. The first few times he responds to a smile with a smile, he is almost certain to cause something of a sensation. So he works on perfecting this social technique. He begins to learn that a winning smile helps to maintain for him a favorable position with those on whom his well-being depends.

He has started to learn what it means to interact socially. Learning to talk (see the area of concept formation discussed below) is, of course, a tremendous step in this direction.

#### Early Childhood

1. *Beginning to develop the ability to interact with age-mates.* When the child reaches the nursery school and kindergarten stage he is identifying strongly with adults. Whatever social confidence he possesses is grounded in interaction with adults, and they are his most important playmates. In the school situation, however, these adults plan group activities for him and his peers. To retain the affection and approval of adults which he still needs so strongly, he finds that he must learn to take part in these group activities. Thus organized games exist in early childhood, provided an adult keeps them going.

Some children are quick to find enjoyment in these group games. They begin to seek out an age-mate for a play partner. "Parallel play" in which children do not really interact, but rather play alongside one another, becomes typical of this stage of development. Generally speaking, the only time real interaction occurs is when one of the partners has something the other one wants; he is likely to grab for it, and a fight may ensue. Parallel

play groups are always very unstable and hold together for brief periods only.

The child who engages in parallel play soon learns that to retain the esteem of adults he must learn to share things with other children. He gradually achieves a certain realization of the rights of others, and he begins to master social techniques which lead to the possibility of social interaction. Of course, he does not accomplish this difficult learning overnight. Yet toward the end of this stage of development it is not unusual, for example, to see one child busily putting a doll to bed, while one or two other children stand by observing and occasionally assisting. Real group interaction, however, remains for the future. Play continues to be essentially a means of self-extension through exploration of different roles.

2. *Adjusting in the family to expectations it has for the child as a member of the social unit.* The child continues at this stage of development to seek much of his companionship among adults in the family. But parents, he finds, are becoming less willing to love him merely because "he is he." He is coming to realize that he has certain obligations and duties which he must learn to perform if he is to retain his rights and privileges. Thus, perhaps, he may have to eat all the food that is placed before him if he is to retain the privilege of being served in this manner, and if he is to preserve his right to a big share of mother's affection.

In all areas of his development demands are increasingly being made to which he must learn to conform as a social being. He is making his first attempts at developing good human relations. He is learning to commit fewer sins against property, and he is starting out on the long road toward learning good taste and acceptable manners.

### Late Childhood

1. *Clarifying the adult world as over and against the child's world.* The child at this stage must begin to sever his strong ties with adults and must begin to build ties with his peers. In the past his chief interest has been in pleasing adults; now he must learn to meet peer standards. He must, for example, begin to talk and dress like his friends, perhaps in spite of what adults say. Instead of identifying only with adults, he must begin to identify with age-mates.

This is a difficult developmental task for the child because he has depended so long on adults. But if he does well at this task, he may progress to the point where, for example, he seriously resents it if his mother visits the school. The family, he feels, must be kept in its place.

Similarly, the teacher no longer plays a central role in his life. He may become resentful and openly defiant if the teacher's demands upon him contradict the demands of his peers.

2. *Establishing peer groupness and learning to belong.* As the child begins to loosen his ties with adults, he must turn elsewhere for the security that is so essential for his healthy development. Accordingly, children begin to band together; in gangs they are able to give support to one another and to build a firm foundation for the strong anti-adult position they will assume as early adolescents.

Middle-class children seem to be frequently restrained from opportunities to participate in the creation of a peer group, the pillar upon which they must lean in their fight for independence. This is essentially because middle-class adults (including teachers) are inclined to take too much responsibility for children's recreation. Older children, for example, are not only capable of organizing their own games, but in doing so they improve their cooperative abilities. If they organize their games on a gang versus gang basis, they solidify their feelings of "belongingness." Adults should not fear this cliquishness at this stage. Indeed, human beings in America probably will never again belong to such democratic groups as the gangs formed in late childhood.

### Early Adolescence

1. *Behaving according to a shifting peer code.* During this stage of development the peer code undergoes some significant changes, and to master the code as it shifts is an exacting job that requires hard work. The boy or girl who fails at this task becomes the social isolate or the scapegoat.

The first shifts in the peer culture occur as girls begin to reach puberty—usually one or two years earlier than the boys. For boys, less mature and often actually smaller, in the same classrooms with these girls, there is a kind of intensification at first of the late childhood patterns of desirable behavior. They must have even more "nerve" than they had before. They must be even more ready to fight. Exclusion of girls becomes a positive thing. They "hate" girls. The idea that it is sissyish for boys to act like girls is sharpened, and there is a stronger penalty for boys who do not conform. They must, for example, become even more unkempt.

Girls are learning to make a turnabout in their former patterns. Being demure is no longer a means of achieving status. In order to remain a participant in this topsy-turvy society a girl has the alternatives of becoming sophisticated and glamorous, of becoming a jolly-good-fellow with less mature boys, or of reaching out of her classroom group to more mature boys in higher grades.

This state of affairs exists until boys begin to reach puberty. Now *they* must learn a whole new set of behavior patterns. There is a breaking down

of the separation between the sexes. To get along in the postpubertal peer group a boy must be better groomed than he was before. He must be popular with the other sex; that is, he must be able to talk with girls, he must be seen with girls, he must become a good dancer. For boys who come from upper- and middle-class families fighting is now played down. (In the lower class it continues.)

Many children are not ready or able to cope with these dramatic changes that occur between the pre- and postpubertal peer cultures. These adolescents withdraw from the developing heterosexual society. They do not make the contacts demanded; they remain socially isolated throughout the last years of high school and the first years of college. They are also likely to remain very dependent on adults.<sup>1</sup>

### Late Adolescence

1. *Adopting an adult-patterned set of social values by learning a new peer code.* As long as the prepubertal peer culture is the dominant one, teachers often say: "This is a truly democratic group. All that matters to these boys and girls is character and intelligence. There are no race, creed, color, or ethnic group feelings among them." Cleavage is on a sex basis, but they function well as a group.

Up to the stage of late adolescence there have been no "serious" or "steady" boy-girl relationships which are likely to lead to marriage. Now this situation no longer prevails. In the late adolescent peer world, "fitting into the social picture" takes on entirely different characteristics.

These same individuals who were so democratic a short while ago are now faced with the task of working themselves into the highly stratified adult world. They accomplish the task by splitting up into small strong cliques which reflect the social class patterns of adult society. These cliques take on the nature of the adult model, either subtly or openly pressed to do so by social-class minded families and sometimes by teachers. The late adolescent peer culture prepares the way for its members to move into mature adulthood.

## IV. Developing a Conscience

### Infancy

1. *Beginning to adjust to the expectations of others.* The infant is extremely egocentric. He follows his own wishes, and parents can do little more than guess what he is going to do next. Yet parents, as the representa-

<sup>1</sup> The interested reader is referred to Tryon, Caroline M. "The Adolescent Peer Culture." Forty-Third Yearbook, Part I, *Adolescence*. National Society for the Study of Education. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944. p. 217-39.

tives of society, begin to make certain demands on the infant who very soon finds himself faced with the task of adjusting some of his behavior to conform with their expectations.

He must first learn to recognize parental authority. Thus, he begins to understand the implications of certain vocal intonations, such as the displeasure expressed in "No, No." He learns to adjust to commands. As he approaches the end of infancy, he begins to understand when mother says in a firm voice, "Do not touch that clock!" that the clock is an object which he must avoid if he is to keep the affection of his mother. Nevertheless, he still cannot be relied on. His memory is short; his exploratory interests are strong—too strong, usually, for him to control.

### Early Childhood

1. *Developing the ability to take directions and to be obedient in the presence of authority.* As the child reaches this stage of development he is on his way toward becoming a socialized human being, although he still needs a great deal of "socializing." In early childhood he reaches a maturational level where he becomes responsive to the rewards and punishments his parents use as a means of instruction. It is the period of strong identification with parents, particularly identification with own-sex parent. He wants to participate and do the things his parents or older siblings do. He must now, to a certain extent, learn to take directions and to be obedient if he is to progress smoothly through this area of development. But he is inclined to forget if the authority figure is not there, in the flesh.

2. *Developing the ability to be obedient in the absence of authority where conscience substitutes for authority.* It has been pointed out that during this stage of development the child is identifying strongly with adults, particularly with his parents and with his teachers. This identification makes this period in the child's life the most important of all from the standpoint of the development of conscience. Parents have been imposing on the child a complicated body of rules and values. In order to retain the loving support of adults the child internalizes their standards of behavior. Their values become his values, and if he does something that his mother or his teacher has told him is naughty, even though he is sure she will never find out, he feels guilty about it.

The complicated standards that the child internalizes have a potent effect on all his future behavior. Through his identifications he has taken into himself the essence of the consciences of his parents and teachers; from what they have shown him of their consciences he succeeds in developing one of his own. There is often great confusion and conflict for the lower-class child when he comes to school and encounters the middle-class values



of his teachers and is faced with the task of reconciling these values to those he has already learned.

### Late Childhood

1. *Learning more rules and developing true morality.* With the decline in identification with adults and the growing identification with age-mates, there is a shift in the manner in which conscience develops. The peer world is a world of rules. There is a tremendous increase in interest in organized games, many of which have exceedingly complex systems of rules. Not only are there game rules; there are countless special non-adult rules governing life in general in the peer world. These rules must be internalized for true participation and acceptance. The rules sometimes imply not only consideration for the feelings and privileges of others, but also obligations toward others. There is open discussion of faults, and those who transgress the rules are quickly and severely punished.

As more and more rules are mastered and as the child continues to mature intellectually, true morality comes into being. Children learn to apply the abstract principles of fairness and unfairness, right and wrong. Such expressions as "That's not fair" and "It's wrong to do such-and-such" become commonplace in the conversation of children at the end of this stage of development.<sup>2</sup>

### Early Adolescence

There seems to be no marked development of conscience at this level. The early adolescent does, however, have the job of acquiring the ability to deal with and to gain some measure of control over his emotions—emotions which are rapidly becoming more intense. This entails a strong reassertion and an extension of the principles and rules already mastered.

### Late Adolescence

1. *Learning to verbalize contradictions in moral codes, as well as discrepancies between principle and practice, and resolving these problems in a responsible manner.* The late adolescent must develop a more rational and realistic conscience than he has heretofore possessed. This means that he must develop the ability to think through moral and ethical problems. In American society the late adolescent is confronted with many problems of conscience. The code of the peer group sometimes differs from that of the larger culture. For example, boys think that drinking parties are fine, but parents say no. The late adolescent has to decide which values are going to be "right" for him.

<sup>2</sup> The reader who is interested in a detailed description of this developmental task is referred to Piaget, Jean. *The Moral Judgment of the Child*. Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1948.



He also becomes strongly aware of the discrepancies between principle and practice in the world about him. Thus, he has been "taught" human equality, yet his parents frown on his friendship with a Negro classmate. There are contradictions in the peer code itself; for example, the other fellows are not supposed to flirt with his girl, but some of them begin to do it anyway.

Often adolescents discuss among themselves the numerous problems that arise in relation to this task. They realize that they must work these problems out for themselves; they must decide what is right and wrong for them as individuals and as members of a group. Young people who rationally arrive at principles which enable them to function as responsible adults have successfully completed this developmental task. On the other hand, those who reject all moral codes and who band together to defy social authority are the extreme failures in this area of development.

## V. Learning One's Psycho-Socio-Biological Sex Role

### Infancy

There are probably no developmental tasks at this level. However, by acting differently toward boys than toward girls, adults very early begin to set the stage for future tasks in this area.

### Early Childhood

1. *Learning to identify with male adult and female adult roles.* When children enter this stage of development, boys and girls are socially and emotionally much alike. Thus, boys and girls play with a doll in much the same fashion; they dress and undress it, care for it when "sick," and in general take the part of mother.

Normally, however, a decided change begins to take place in early childhood. Boys begin to identify with their fathers, then with men in general; girls begin to identify more strongly with their mothers, then with women in general. These identifications, if they develop as they should, lead to a pronounced and rather rapid alteration in children's behavior as it is reflected in their play. Those roles which are socially approved for the sexes must be learned, and they are learned gradually through practice in dramatic play. In kindergarten, we find girls, and not boys, taking the part of mother, maid, and nurse; while boys take the part of father, postman, and doctor. Adults generally hasten this process along. Fathers in our society, for example, become impatient with sons, even very young ones, who play with dolls.

The task in our society is probably more difficult for boys who live in urban areas than it is for those in rural areas. Farm boys at an early age can follow their fathers. It is difficult or impossible for many city chil-

dren to imagine just what their fathers actually do all day; and when dad does return home in the evening, from a "hard day at the office" or the factory, he is rarely in a mood to romp on the floor with the children.

### Late Childhood

1. *Beginning to identify with one's social contemporaries of the same sex.* By this stage of development the average girl is physiologically a full year ahead of the average boy of the same chronological age. Boys and girls do not play freely together as they did in the previous stage. Instead, the "gang age" is one of sharp differentiation between the sexes: boys generally play with boys, girls generally play with girls. When boys and girls do organize themselves into games it is often "boys against the girls."

In such a social setting children have the task of learning to understand and to be like their sex mates. For boys this implies learning such behavior as expressing affection for pals by punching and "rassling"; to get along with the gang they must be good at poking, tripping, practical joking. Girls learn to express affection by putting their arms around each other. These who have high status with their peers are usually demure and sweet, although tomboy behavior may not be condemned.

The peer group taboos children, particularly boys, who are failing in this task. For example, the term "sissy" with its far-reaching psychological repercussions may be applied to the boy who has not successfully moved through the previous task and who is still strongly identified with adults.

### Early Adolescence

1. *Strong identification with one's sex mates.* At first the adolescent emphasizes identification with peers of his or her sex. But boys will take time off from purely boy-business to boo or make snide remarks about the girls' ball game. The girl is busy with her appearance and gets into scuffling proximity to boys, shouting her disapproval of everything boyish. Then we find the boy secretly carrying a pocket comb and wetting down his tousled hair, forgetting that his neck is dirty and his shoes scuffed. The taboos of the prepubertal boy peer culture against being seen with girls and against dancing begin to break down.<sup>3</sup>

2. *Learning one's role in heterosexual relationships.* With the maturing of the reproductive organs during pubescence, the individual becomes ready to take on the job of learning about sexual love and reproduction. This is a highly complex task for American children, where sexual attitudes and behavior are influenced, among other things, by social class, economic responsibility, and religious ethics.

<sup>3</sup> Tryon, Caroline M. *Evaluation of Adolescent Personality by Adolescents.* Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, Vol. IV, No. 4, Washington: National Research Council, 1939.

Getting accustomed to physical contact with the opposite sex is at best a difficult job. A boy alone with a girl wonders, "What do you talk about with girls?" Commonly, we see boys at this stage touching girls on their shoulders or arms. This does not necessarily produce sexual desire; rather it is a matter of getting to know the other person.

The task is further complicated by the fact that eighth-grade girls have generally reached this stage of maturity while most eighth-grade boys are still in late childhood. These girls are forced into an aggressive role with their male classmates, a role which is out of keeping with cultural patterns of femininity. Therefore, many girls, in preference to acting aggressively, withdraw into romantic fantasy. The early maturing boy gets along well with the girls at this stage; the late maturing boy has the hardest time of all—he lags behind everybody in this area of development.

The whole process of preparation for fatherhood and motherhood is made even more difficult by the fact that adults, especially middle-class adults, are extremely anxious over moral aspects of bodily pleasure. Children hesitate to approach adults on matters related to sex.

The school is in a position to help children with this developmental task. Needs for sex education can probably not be met satisfactorily by a single course in the curriculum. This inevitably sets up a false separation of the subject from everyday experience. However, there are many opportunities in the classroom to help the student in his adaptation to this new role. For example, in discussing poetry, many points about friendship, love, marriage, and family life may be unobtrusively brought out. The social and biological sciences, in particular, offer numerous opportunities for helpful digressions on the social and biological aspects of sex.

### Late Adolescence

1. *Exploring possibilities for a future mate and acquiring "desirability."* The post-World War I innovation of "dating" is the chief means by which the adolescent starts to work on this task. Dates are well suited for social exploration in that they entail no far-reaching obligations.

Marriage and procreation are esteemed in our society as serious adult matters, and dating, as a preliminary to marriage, generally becomes a serious part of the life of late adolescents. The peer group's picture of the attributes of "a good date" becomes the model which boys and girls strive to attain. Boys must cultivate good manners, grooming, and poise if they are to associate with the most desirable girls. Girls have to take pains to cultivate glamour and "sex appeal."

Dating may be followed by "going steady." The imminence of marriage is somewhat increased, and the young man and woman involved ordi-

narily become concerned with whether they "really love each other," which in our modern society means the probability of their succeeding as lifelong companions. The relationship, however, is still easily broken off, thus permitting further exploration.

2. *Choosing an occupation.* This developmental task becomes very important for boys who will have to earn their living and support their families. In America jobs are looked on primarily as a source of income and status by which one obtains what he wants; only secondarily are they thought of as opportunities for self-expression.

Young children say they are going to be firemen; early adolescents say they are going to be movie actors, aviators, or ball players. Then in late adolescence parents and counselors begin seriously to ask, "What are you going to be?" Young people hear much talk about vocations: the kind of young man business and industry want, what the farmer should be like. Confronted with vocational choices in high school, and the question of what type of adult role to take, the late adolescent must become thoughtful in a somewhat different way than before. He becomes impatient with the curriculum of some of his courses, and responds most heartily to things that have a practical aspect. He is approaching the point where he is going to have to make a far-reaching decision.

This task also exists for girls. They now have the problem of adjusting to varying conceptions of the dependent-independent female role. If girls

*"What are you going to be?"*

Baltimore, Maryland, Public Schools



are oriented exclusively toward marriage and homemaking, they may, for example, be dissatisfied with courses which do not give them practice in the latest methods of preparing foods and of decorating interiors. If, on the other hand, they are oriented toward a career, or if they feel that they should be able to supplement the family income after marriage, they are confronted with numerous alternatives in choosing an occupation.

3. *Preparing to accept one's future role in manhood or womanhood as a responsible citizen of the larger community.* Late adolescents especially begin to become aware of their obligations as citizens. They are often idealistic and extremely "liberal" in their outlook. They may become seriously concerned with social problems such as bad housing, lack of play space for children, and so on. Their concern is usually more in the realm of thinking and talking than doing.

Accomplishment of this task frequently involves identification with adults, reminiscent of the stage of early childhood. However, the adults with whom late adolescents identify may be men and women whom they do not know personally, but whom they have heard and read about. Girls, for example, will frequently identify with Florence Nightingale; boys, with Franklin Roosevelt.

## VI. Accepting and Adjusting to a Changing Body

### Infancy

1. *Adjusting to adult feeding demands.* The normal newborn has little difficulty in developing the ability to nurse, that is, to grasp the nipple and to coordinate his sucking and swallowing. However, a developmental task is created for him when adults limit the times at which they permit nursing. There seem to be social class differences operating here. The infant in a lower-class home is customarily fed when he is hungry, and accordingly, this task may not exist for him. In middle- and upper-class homes, on the other hand, the infant is more likely to be fed on a rigid time schedule. He is faced with the task of adjusting to the clock.

In recent years doctors who have made careful studies of infant feeding habits have begun to advocate feeding the child when he gives signs of hunger, regardless of a time schedule. They believe that by satisfying the child's needs when he actually feels them, parents can help to convey the sense of security that is so essential for the infant's healthy development. Were mothers to follow this advice and adjust to the feeding demands of their children, they would probably smooth the way for the child in this area of development.

Gradually, the child's digestive apparatus matures sufficiently so that he is able to eat and assimilate foods other than liquids; he is expected to

learn to forego the sucking method. The manner in which the child is weaned probably has important psychological implications. It is generally agreed that harsh and sudden weaning should be avoided.

2. *Adjusting to adult cleanliness demands.* American mothers, and especially middle-class mothers, seem to take pride in the fact that their babies are toilet trained at an early age. Mothers frequently work hard at "teaching" the child to control the eliminative processes long before the nerves which govern voluntary urination and defecation are mature enough to function. They are wasting time and energy. But more important than this, children who are slow to "learn" often cause anxiety in their mothers. This anxiety is quickly, even if unintentionally, transmitted back to the child, and he in turn may begin to feel anxious. If parents would learn to delay toilet training, a great deal of trouble would be avoided.

Usually, by the time children approach the end of infancy they are physiologically and mentally capable of accomplishing this task. Then with gentle adult guidance during the period that follows they learn, with effort but with a minimum of anxiety, to control themselves in an appropriate manner.

3. *Adjusting to adult attitudes toward genital manipulation.* One of the first things babies have to find out about is themselves. All parts of their bodies are new to them, and one of the important ways they explore themselves is by touching. Babies discover their genitals just as they discover their fingers and toes. Once they have found their genitals, they usually find that it is pleasurable to finger them. But they must learn to forego this pleasure in accordance with our cultural attitudes.

From the standpoint of later development, there are healthy and unhealthy ways to accomplish this task. Often when infants begin to handle their genitals, parents become very disturbed. Parents who feel that sex is evil and dirty may be totally unable to accept this infantile genital manipulation. Others who can accept sexuality in adults may become uneasy and worried when they see it in their own children. The infant will almost inevitably internalize the same attitudes his parents have. He may develop deep-seated and long-lasting feelings of repulsion toward his own genitals; or, if not that, he may begin to feel that there is something not quite clean and good about himself in these regions of his body. In either case he outwardly accomplishes the developmental task. He stops fingering his genitals. But he does this because of deep anxiety and fear. Later he will be expected to make a satisfactory heterosexual adjustment in marriage, and this task will be inestimably more difficult because of his unfavorable early impressions toward his own sexuality.



On the other hand, parents who accept as natural the early genital manipulation of their children can guide them in a healthy way through this developmental task. The child learns that touching himself is something that is not done in public; his mother and father do not do it, and now that he is growing up he does not do it either. Parents can further help by providing him with ample love and with stimulating new interests. He thus accomplishes the task without getting the impression that his sexual organs are wicked and unclean.<sup>4</sup>

### Early Childhood

1. *Adjusting to expectations resulting from one's improving muscular abilities.* Throughout early childhood there is a continuous development of large muscle control and improved coordination of large and small muscles. The rates at which children improve in these abilities vary. However, in the classroom and on the playground the slow developers are in daily contact with the fast, and this contact, even at this early age, involves the element of competition. Young children are already internalizing the general American emphasis on "beating the next guy."

If, in such a setting, children are evaluated by adults in terms of an age norm of muscular ability, the physical inferiority of the slow developers is emphasized. As these children try to adjust to adult expectations, they begin to feel generally inferior. They may give up active effort in this area of development and become isolates, refusing to participate with other children. Such behavior is, of course, extremely detrimental to the child's development as a whole.

Teachers can help small children accomplish this developmental task by trying to sensitize themselves to individual differences in maturation. The teacher avoids fostering competition; she avoids such remarks as: "Who can paint the best house?" or, "Look how high and how fast Johnnie climbed the jungle-gym!" In short, effort is exerted toward helping the slow maturer avoid feelings of inferiority, and toward helping the fast maturer avoid feelings of superiority. Each child can adjust to his rapidly or slowly improving muscular abilities if social expectations are geared to his personal capacities.

2. *Developing sex modesty.* Children at this stage of development are expected to learn that their genital organs are to be kept hidden. Up to this time, if all has gone well in this area of development, the child has no idea that his genitals should be less in public view than other parts of his body. Accordingly, he may be slow in working on this task, and he

<sup>4</sup> The reader who is interested in some of the social class differences involved in the three developmental tasks described above is referred to Davis, Allison, and Havighurst, Robert J. "Social Class and Color Differences in Child-Rearing." *American Sociological Review* 2:698-710; December 1946.



may have many regressions. For example, standing under the lawn sprinkler in front of the house on a hot summer's day, he is most likely to remove his bathing trunks. Or he may walk right in on the afternoon bridge group with no clothes on.

Given time and a bit of cheerful encouragement the child will successfully work through this task without undue anxiety. The real danger lies in forcing him to accomplish the job too quickly, thus implanting ideas of the wickedness and uncleanness of his body, ideas which he may never be able to outgrow.

### Late Childhood

This is a period of relatively little bodily change. Sex interests are at their lowest ebb, and there is no real developmental task in this area at this time.

### Early Adolescence

1. *Reorganizing one's thoughts and feelings about one's self in the face of significant bodily changes and their concomitants.* Pubescence is a period of rapid physical growth which is marked by the attainment of adult sexual characteristics. In boys, the most obvious changes are the growth of the external genitals and body and facial hair, and a deepening of the voice. In girls, there is growth of body hair and menstruation begins. In both sexes there are marked changes in physical proportions. In girls, the breasts grow and the hips become wider. Boys' shoulders broaden in proportion to hip width.

Children vary enormously as to the chronological age at which they reach this stage of maturity. Some girls reach puberty at 9½ years; some boys do not achieve puberty until they are 18.

In American society almost all children worry in this period about whether they are normal. For example, slow-maturing boys are deeply concerned over whether their genitals ever will grow, or whether their bodies will ever grow taller. Fast maturing girls worry whether their breasts will ever stop developing, or whether they will always be taller than boys. Adults can help children by explaining to them the enormous range of normalcy. This will not solve all the problems of all young adolescents, but it will be reassuring and may help to relieve some of their anxiety about being abnormal or "queer."

The psychological implications of this developmental task are tremendous. They have been merely hinted at here for lack of space, and the interested reader is referred to other books on adolescent development.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Zachry, Caroline. *Emotion and Conduct in Adolescence*. New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1940. p. 31-73.

2. *Accepting the reality of one's appearance.* The pubescent child is very self-conscious; he becomes, among other things, concerned about his looks. During this stage of development he achieves his approximate adult size and appearance. It is true that the way he looks will continue to change throughout his future life, but the changes from now on will be much slower.

In America, commercial emphasis on "beauty" makes accepting one's appearance particularly difficult for girls. Advertising, movies, and "cheese-cake" pictures urge them toward endless improvement, and they spend hours dressing and primping. Many girls fail to accomplish this task and continue to struggle with it throughout their lives. In our society the middle-aged woman who tinkers for hours in front of her mirror is far from rare.

The boy, too, may have his difficulties in this area. The muscle-building, the stretching exercises, the hair pomades and skin lotions are well-known symptoms of a boy's anxiety over personal appearance.

### Late Adolescence

1. *Learning appropriate outlets for sexual drives.* While the child learns to adjust to his sexual drives at earlier stages of development, there is a marked change in the nature and strength of these drives at puberty. A major task for all postpubertal boys and girls in our society is that of learning appropriate sexual behavior which will be satisfying to the individual and at the same time acceptable to society. The adolescent's sexual behavior becomes the focus of adult attention and adult pressures. Acceptable behavior varies greatly from one social class to another, from one ethnic group to another, and from one religious group to another.<sup>6</sup>

Underlying these variations, however, is the common developmental task of preparing to be a good sexual partner in marriage. Sex education, as it is usually offered to adolescents, deals primarily with the physiology of reproduction and with the control of sexual impulses. Adolescents are given little help in learning what they will need to know later—how to establish permanent and mutually satisfying sexual relations with a member of the opposite sex.

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Blos, Peter. *The Adolescent Personality*. New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1941. p. 229-34.

National Society for the Study of Education. *The Forty-Third Yearbook, Part I, Adolescence*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1944.

<sup>6</sup> Kinsey, Alfred C.; Pomeroy, W. B.; Martin, C. E. *Sex Behavior in the Human Male*. Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Company, 1947.

## VII. Managing a Changing Body and Learning New Motor Patterns

### Infancy

1. *Developing physiological equilibrium.* At birth and for a considerable period thereafter, the infant is easily and rapidly affected by even slight changes in environmental conditions. Thus, when the temperature of the air rises sharply, the temperature of his body rises sharply, his metabolic and heart rates fluctuate markedly, and there are fluctuations in other bodily processes.

The eventual existence of the human organism as a relatively independent biological being necessitates the task of developing stable physiological mechanisms. The task cannot be completed until the end of early childhood, at which time the child is about as free as the adult from dependence on the environment for his survival.

2. *Developing eye-hand coordination.* After the first few months of life the infant becomes sufficiently mature, physically and mentally, to undertake this task. He is now able to carry on the exploratory activities which are essential to his healthy development. He learns to grasp those objects which he sees and to manipulate them with some assurance.

3. *Establishing satisfactory rhythms of rest and activity.* The infant uses enormous amounts of energy in physical growth. He may double his birth weight in five months, triple it in twelve. At first he has to sleep most of the twenty-four hours of the day, but as his rate of growth gradually slows down, he has more energy available for other important work to be done. His healthy development as a whole seems to depend on his establishing appropriate balance between activity and rest.

### Early Childhood

1. *Developing large muscle control.* From the physiological point of view, the large muscles are by now well developed, and the child is faced with the task of becoming proficient in their use. He must start to develop skill in the use of his arms, legs, and trunk.

The child accomplishes the task by becoming enormously active. He gains control of his body by running, jumping, and climbing. His play has a serious purpose and it involves the expenditure of great quantities of energy. With effort, skill increases, and children become good at skipping, riding tricycles, and dancing to rhythmic tunes. The successful child, increasingly secure in his ability to control his large muscles, is exemplified by the young daredevil walking along the ledge of a stone wall.

Many children who enter first grade are at work on this developmental task. The understanding teacher will provide opportunities for physical activity and will not expect the impossible in terms of muscular control.

2. *Learning to coordinate large muscles and small muscles.* Although the finer muscles of hands and fingers are not yet well enough developed for purposes of fine manipulation, the child now has this task of improving coordination. He is expected, for example, to learn how to dress and undress himself. He becomes able to pull on and off certain items of clothing, but such achievements as tying shoe laces are physiologically still difficult. He is able, with effort, to master such an involved process as picking up a cake of soap, turning water faucets, and washing his own hands. He comes to take pride in his ability to paint "pictures" and takes them home for mother and father to admire.

### Late Childhood

1. *Refining and elaborating skill in the use of small muscles.* There is little bodily change in this period. The finer muscles of hands and fingers are now sufficiently developed so that the child is able to undertake learnings that require a large degree of manual dexterity, such as writing, sewing, and woodwork. Eye muscles are now sufficiently developed to enable the child to learn to read. (In many schools, reading is introduced too early; many a reading failure is due to physiological immaturity.)

### Early Adolescence

1. *Controlling and using a "new" body.* Pubescence or puberty is a period of such rapid growth that the child would be faced with a gigantic task even if all his body parts grew at the same time. But they do not; different body parts grow at different times and at different rates. To make the task more difficult still, the power and the strength available to the child increase much more rapidly than his skills. The young adolescent appears to be clumsiness personified. He trips over his own big feet and gets tangled in his long legs as he tries to pick himself up. He reaches for a magazine on the table and knocks over the lamp.

Most children are helped in working through this developmental task by engaging in games which involve strenuous physical exercise. Girls often become active participants in tennis and swimming, while boys play baseball, basketball, and football. In these activities they gradually learn to master their new bodies.

Some children, however, have turned thumbs-down on athletics before this stage of development. Thus, a boy in late childhood who is a "dud" at baseball may quit all active sports, deciding that he is just not an athlete. He withdraws to the world of books or other sedentary activities such as



*Denver, Colorado, Public Schools*

*Using tools helps develop coordination.*

stamp-collecting. When such a child reaches early adolescence he is at a serious disadvantage. He has not only forsaken a means of gaining status in the peer group, but he will probably not now undertake this developmental task. He may remain throughout life physically inferior to his potential motor capacities. As a young adult he will have frequent occasion to say: "No, thanks, not me. I can't dance, can't play golf or tennis, can't swim, can't hit a nail without banging my thumb." Such a person was not "born that way." Rather, he never learned to use his body in ways appropriate to successive developmental stages.

### **Late Adolescence**

After puberty the rate of bodily growth rapidly declines, and there seem to be no new tasks in this area at this stage of development. The late adolescent consolidates previous gains. He improves motor skills through exercise and practice and achieves as much body poise and grace as he probably ever will have.

## **VIII. Learning To Understand and Control the Physical World**

### **Infancy**

1. *Exploring the physical world.* A baby, to develop normally, must at a very early age start to discover the meaning of the objects in his immediate environment. His first investigations are carried on by means of sensory exploration. He looks, listens, and tastes; he touches everything that comes within his grasp. As he matures he learns to walk and thus to explore ever-increasing areas.

As a concomitant of his earliest exploration the infant begins to develop the ability of space perception. Many infants by the time they are half through this stage of development will not reach for objects which are outside their grasp.

The infant is also laying the groundwork for the development of weight perception. However, even at the end of this stage of development he drops many objects because they look lighter than they actually are.

### Early Childhood

1. *Meeting adult expectations for restrictive exploration and manipulation of an expanding environment.* The infant's task of finding out about the physical world continues with little diminution into this stage of development. But as the environment broadens, there are even more dangerous and easily damaged objects, and the child discovers more and more things which he is prohibited from touching. The fact that he must learn these prohibitions enormously complicates the task of exploration, but perhaps the most bitter pill is that so many very intriguing objects must remain outside the realm of his investigation; indeed, their being forbidden makes them even more intriguing.

Many children circumvent the "hands-off" policy of adults by resorting to considerable fantasy. They put objects into fantasies and they imagine themselves "things" and animals.

By asking questions, they try to supplement the information which they are able to gain from the experimentation they are permitted. "What" and "why" questions pour forth at a rate that is certain to try the patience of even a willing and sympathetic adult. Children gain further information by looking at pictures, by being read to, and by having stories told to them.

The child is ordinarily permitted enough actual manipulation so that he begins to develop the ability to perceive differences in weights of objects and to improve his perception of space. Toward the end of this stage of development he may be able to judge short distances accurately; he is mastering the technique of using his own body as a point of reference.

In addition, he begins to lay the foundation of a sense of time. He may progress to the point of knowing what day it is, although to tell him to come downstairs "in an hour" is a waste of words.

### Late Childhood

1. *Learning more realistic ways of studying and controlling the physical world.* As the child gradually learns *how* to handle objects and comes to understand *why* he cannot touch certain things, the adult "do-not-touch" becomes much less significant in his life. At the same time he is able to



free himself from such strong reliance on fantasy and questioning. He becomes ready to take on the job of realistic experimenter in the world about him and in his own right.

Nothing escapes the personal notice of the child who is working hard on this task. He is physicist, zoologist, social scientist, chemist, astronomer, engineer all rolled into one. What he cannot pick up he climbs on and pokes into; what he can pick up he puts into his pocket, waiting for "spare time" to make an examination behind the open top of his school desk during "social studies." As preparation for adult life in the machine age, the boy especially is likely to develop a burning interest in mechanical things. He makes; he manipulates; he sees how it works.

By means of experimentation, he is able to perfect his abilities to perceive weight, space, and time. (In regard to time, of course, an hour playing ball is much shorter than an hour spent in social studies class.)

### Early Adolescence

The area drops in significance at this stage, as the young adolescent finds it necessary to concentrate the bulk of his energy on tasks in other areas. However, he continues to some extent the task he began in the preceding stage of development. He must also continue to enlarge the world of his acquaintance by perfecting skills of getting around the city, traveling away from home, and so on.

*Exploring the world of nature is fun.*

*Federal Works Agency*





### Late Adolescence

There are probably no developmental tasks in this area for the late adolescent, although at this time many individuals embark on scientific careers in which the major portion of their lives will be devoted to discovering better ways of understanding and controlling phenomena in the physical world.

## IX. Developing an Appropriate Symbol System and Conceptual Abilities

### Infancy

1. *Developing preverbal communication.* The ability to communicate readily with other people and the ability to think are not developed spontaneously. They are learned over a period of time, and the learning processes require the expenditure of a tremendous amount of energy. The infant starts to work in this area of development during the very first days of life.

By the time he is one month old, he is usually able to make several different vocalizations. These seem to have no meaning at first; they are largely reflex in character. But during the weeks that follow he makes significant progress, and he learns to attend to the speaking voice. When mother talks to him he becomes definitely aware of this special factor in his environment.

In another couple of months the infant learns to babble and coo. He repeats the same sounds over and over. He is also beginning to respond when socially stimulated. When mother smiles at him, he begins to smile back. When she disappears, he may cry.

Then new aspects of the task confront the growing baby. He must learn to vocalize feelings of pleasure and displeasure and to articulate many syllables. This accomplished, he moves on to the problems of vocalizing recognition, understanding the gestures of others, and understanding certain words used by others, such as "No!" By the time he is half through this stage of development, he is beginning to be able to adjust to the verbal commands of the adults around him. He is also learning to use gestures to express himself; perhaps he waves bye-bye. Gradually, as he succeeds in finding words to express himself, his use of gestures declines.

2. *Developing verbal communication.* By the time most infants embark on the second half of this stage of development, they have learned to imitate words as adults intervene in their babblings. They may with adult encouragement repeat, for example, "mamma," "papa," "dada," "bye-bye," and "bow-wow." But their big job lies in bridging the tremendous psychological gap between the mere utterance of sounds and the symbolic use of the word in an appropriate situation. At the same time the child is

slowly beginning to build a vocabulary. Soon he can point to nose, eyes, hair, and mouth. At this period in the child's life, one word usually stands for a whole sentence. As time goes on, he has to add to his vocabulary, and he also has to learn to use words in combination. It is usually after he has learned to walk that he turns the major portion of his energy to the job of vocabulary building.

*Rudimentary Concept Formation.* Even before the infant is able to use verbal expression, the way in which he responds to such familiar objects as his bottle and his toys indicates that he is beginning to understand what they mean. As his verbal abilities grow he begins to develop rapidly his ability to reason, and he is soon interpreting new happenings in terms of what he has already learned.

His earliest concepts are related to mother, father, home, and siblings, and he enlarges on these as time goes on. Most of the early concepts carry an emotional meaning for the child.

### Early Childhood

1. *Improving one's use of the symbol system.* The young child must make important strides in improving his vocabulary, sentence structure, and pronunciation in a way which will lead to a true exchange of ideas. Toward the end of this period his vocabulary usually totals some 3000 words. He learns to use longer sentences. Early in the period he uses sentences of only two or three words; at the end, five or six words. He begins to use compound and complex sentences. His talk, in general, is still egocentric, but as his power to form meaningful sentences grows, his power to think also grows.

2. *Enormous Elaboration of the Concept Pattern.* During this period the child has to establish rules of conduct and to explore reality by ceaseless questioning. He begins to make a serious attempt at understanding the world. "Why" questions arise rapidly about birth, death, God, infinity, where babies come from, where speech comes from, how people get sick, what pain is, where does the electricity go when the light is turned off. Because of insufficient experience, however, the young child has no definite concepts of space, time, cause and effect, and his understanding of reality is vague. In answering his questions, then, parents and teachers may give certain realistic details, but they should not give so many details as to bewilder the child rather than to enlighten him.

The child progresses in his understanding of the world by learning what things *do*, or what we do to them or with them, before he can appreciate what they *are*. For example, if we were to ask him what "camp" means, he would probably respond something like "To go in tents." He focuses on action, although toward the end of early childhood he may

occasionally define an object by categorizing it. His concepts are becoming less vague, more specific. For example, he learns to apply "toys" only to playthings as such, whereas in infancy toys meant anything with which he played. He perceives more details.

The child now begins to work at the concept of consciousness. At first consciousness means "something that can move." He assumes that the sun and a bicycle are conscious, while a table is not.

The young child must also learn to differentiate between reality and imagination. At first these two are much the same to him. However, as his understanding of reality improves, he begins to separate the real from the imagined, and realistic features emerge more and more in his play.

With improved understanding, the ability to adjust thoughts and actions to reality develops. The child's play provides him with numerous opportunities for working on this part of the task. His first attempts at organizing emotional, social, and mental realities are reflected in the rules which are beginning to emerge in his play. He then must extend his growing understanding to the real situations he meets in life.

The young child is trying to establish relationships between different things he has seen and heard, and success here accounts in a large measure for his marked increase in knowledge. He notes successive changes in phenomena *observably* related to each other. He is sometimes inclined, however, to assume that the first phenomenon "caused" the second. This, of course, shows his lack of understanding of real causal relations, but it seems to be part of the progress he must make in developing his powers of reasoning. His difficulty in thinking at this stage lies primarily in the fact that he is still too egocentric. In speaking, he is unable to place himself at the "point of view of his hearer"; in thinking, he is unable to carry on an internalized conversation with himself. But he is moving forward to the more complex conceptual tasks that await him.

### Late Childhood

1. *Learning to use language actually to exchange ideas and to influence one's hearers.* The child must now move away from his early egocentricity. He must really start to converse with others, to consider their points of view, and to address himself to them. At this period he has the job of establishing real bonds with his age-mates, and such bonds cannot be founded on purely egocentric communication. Children at this stage are commencing to understand and to be interested in the problems of other people, if these problems are not too dissimilar from those they themselves have experienced.

At this time they should also be learning to manipulate written symbols. In spoken languages, sentence structure improves.

2. *Beginning to understand real causal relations.* The questions now asked by boys and girls frequently involve true causal relationships. Their conversation is no longer restricted to noting observable changes in objects that may be related to each other. They begin to grasp the notion that "effect" involves more than can be observed directly.

Still, reasoning about what is not observable represents shaky ground for children at this level. In answering questions posed by others, children are still apt to think of "cause" in terms of things they have noticed at the same time. "Why did the pebble sink into the water?" teacher asks Johnnie. "Because it is white," he says. As time goes on, however, Johnnie must improve his ability to understand true causal relationships. Soon he will be seeing "mechanical relations"; he will say that the wind moves the clouds. Later he will be using more scientific and more logical deductions.

In late childhood the focus of attention continues to be on action and movement. But there is progress in the child's notion of consciousness. Now only bodies that can move of their own accord are looked upon as conscious, while objects that receive their movement from without are considered devoid of consciousness. Thus, for example, the child knows that his bicycle is not conscious; it cannot move itself.

3. *Making finer conceptual distinctions and thinking reflectively.* During this stage there is great improvement in the child's ability to use symbols for things he has never experienced. He also grows in his ability to differentiate between the absolute and the relative. He grasps fairly complex differences in degree when the ideas involved evoke clear and vivid images. Thus he should be able to reason: Boys are stronger than girls, but an older girl could knock down a younger boy.

At the same time he is perfecting his ability to separate the personal from the impersonal. He still has a tendency to fall back into the "security of the personal," but he is becoming able to reflect objectively about the outside world and other people. He realizes that the behavior of his friends has complex motivation. Thus, for example, if Bobby should say, "I just want a small dinner today," Jimmy may accuse him, "You're doing that so you can get finished sooner and get more dessert than I do!"

The child in this period is also learning to apply concepts of right and wrong. As noted in the area of conscience development, he is forming in his associations with age-mates clear notions of what is fair, what is honest, what is right.

### Early Adolescence

1. *Using language to express and to clarify more complex concepts.* Early adolescents are learning new words rapidly. They also are becoming more

adept at expressing their thoughts in writing. Their sentences become longer. Toward the end of the period their written sentences average 15-16 words.

2. *Moving from the concrete to the abstract and applying general principles to the particular.* As the young adolescent grows in his ability to move from the concrete to the abstract, he also develops his ability to deal with abstractions. If all has gone well with his previous development in this area he is now working on the job of understanding causal relations in a really mature way. He comprehends more fully those ideas or relations whose content is symbolized in abstract terms. He is now considering causation in terms of abstractions, and he is making more mechanical and logical deductions than before. He is beginning to understand what constitutes "proof."

He is also improving his ability to apply general principles. He is becoming oriented toward the general principle rather than toward the object. Therefore, he is learning what things *are* rather than merely what they *do*. With practice, he soon is able to define words clearly and in general terms, first putting the object of thought in its proper class, and then entering upon a fairly orderly description with explanatory comments. His notion of consciousness is now restricted to plants and animals, or to animals alone. He is approaching the point of being able to discuss such a general idea as, "What is a habit?"

### Late Adolescence

1. *Achieving the level of reasoning of which one is capable.* If the late adolescent has successfully completed all his previous developmental tasks in this area he now moves on to accomplishment of this task. During this period explanation by logical deduction and mechanical causality reach their high point. The late adolescent also makes progress in distinguishing between the realizable and the fanciful. He must approach his adult life in a realistic way; he must plan as best he can for his own future.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The writers are indebted to the following persons for many of the ideas presented on the development of symbols and concepts:

Biber, Barbara, and others. *Child Life in School*. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1942.

Deutsche, Jean Marquis. "The Development of Children's Concepts of Causal Relations," in Barker, R.; Kounin, J.; and Wright, H., *Child Behavior and Development*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1943, 129-45.

Guillet, Cephas. "The Growth of a Child's Concepts." *Pedagogical Seminary*. 24: 81-96; March 1917.

McCarthy, Dorothea. "Language Development in Children" in Carmichael, L., *Manual of Child Psychology*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1946. p. 476-581.

Wolff, Werner. *The Personality of the Preschool Child*. New York: Grune and Stratton, 1946.

## X. Relating One's Self to the Cosmos

Because this area of development overlaps markedly with the areas of conscience development, relating one's self to the physical world, and concept development, it will be considered only very briefly here.

### Infancy

At this stage there seem to be no developmental tasks in this area.

### Early Childhood

1. *Developing a genuine, though uncritical, notion about one's place in the cosmos.* The child's curiosity about his relationship to the universe is growing. He asks adults innumerable "why" questions about birth, God, death, and infinity; and since he is closely identified with adults, he readily accepts their explanations. He does some exploring on his own, and his ability to reason is continuing to develop as he begins to see causal relations. Nevertheless, for the most part he runs to mother and father and places great weight on whatever responses they make to his "why's." For example, if he is told that people die because they are wicked, he accepts that statement at its face value.

### Late Childhood

1. *Developing a scientific approach.* The child's notion of his place in the cosmos probably does not change much in this period. However, in the area of concept formation he is beginning to comprehend true causal relationships and is developing a more realistic concept of the world. At the same time, in his approach to the physical world he is learning to value objective investigation. He no longer depends so strongly on adults for the answers to his "why" questions; instead, he relies on his own observation and experimentation.

His achievement of this scientific outlook will determine the way in which he eventually resolves the problems in this area.

### Early Adolescence

Research studies dealing with the young adolescent suggest that there are probably no developmental tasks in this area at this stage of development. These boys and girls are primarily concerned with themselves and with their changing relations to peers and to adult authority. They seem less concerned about their relations to the cosmos than to their relations to real people.

### Late Adolescence

1. *Formulating a workable belief and value system.* The late adolescent has the task of relating himself to "eternal truths." As has been pointed out,



he is now concerned with abstract problems of right and wrong and with resolving discrepancies between spoken principles and observed practices. His ability to reason and his critical faculties are becoming fully developed. Provided he has successfully accomplished in late childhood the task of developing a scientific approach, he now searches for logically valid ultimate causes. He no longer finds it possible to accept the easy explanations that were offered by adults, and his rational approach does not jibe with many of his old beliefs. Through earlier experimentation he has built up confidence in empirical demonstration. Now those aspects of the cosmos that cannot be empirically demonstrated must be reconciled with those aspects that can be demonstrated. For example, he may accept the theory of evolution; but if he does, he must re-examine his old notions about the origin of things.

As he works through this developmental task, he tries to gain some workable understanding of what the infinite truths of the universe are, and how he as a finite being is related to them. For example, can he rationally hope for personal immortality? He tries to develop some notion of the meaning of life that he can accept, some notion of general values toward which he can aim. This deep concern over his place in the cosmos may lead to intensified adherence to religious precepts he has learned earlier, or it may lead to repudiation of these same precepts and an avid search for other philosophical principles.

### **Implications of Developmental Tasks for Schools, Teachers, and Parents**

The foregoing discussion makes it plain that the developmental tasks which any child is working on are concerns and activities that are with him all day long—and probably at night in his dreams. He does not shed them with his coat in the cloakroom when he comes to school, nor does he separate out into neat compartments those tasks that have to do with peer relations, those that have to do with symbolization and concept development, those that have to do with adult relations, and so on. The child does not work at one of the tasks while he is on the playground, at another when he is in the classroom, and at another when he is at home. They are continuing, interrelated, emotionally toned patterns of motivation for the child. They do not begin in September and end in June, or vice versa.

### **Knowing Each Child**

First of all, then, it is essential that the teacher know her children; that she know which tasks each child is working on, which tasks he has mastered, which ones he has failed. This is a large order, because by the time she has gathered even partial information the group moves on to the next teacher.



And for the teacher in the departmentalized program who must teach 200 or more children each day, the proposal becomes an absurdity.

Adequate cumulative records suggest some solutions to this general problem. But what is usually included in those records that occupy so many thousands of cubic feet of space in our school buildings over the country? Most of them include nothing better than the comments below about Eric made by eight of his teachers during his first six years in school.



*Los Angeles City Board of Education*

*The teacher must know each child.*

1. "Knows how to be a perfect gentleman, but often forgets himself and acts extremely foolish."
2. "... one of the most talented—in our group—wonderful background of information and he reads and writes well... really an ideal pupil... one feels he is headed for something out of the ordinary..."
3. "... rates above the average of his class in physical skills, cooperates well, is attentive and possesses good leadership qualities."
4. "... his uncontrolled conduct is a great handicap to his growth..."
5. "Fun loving, artistic, warm-hearted. Not very serious about anything. Unusual sense and feeling of orderly arrangement..."
6. "Does not have good study habits... His desk is disorderly, his papers untidy, and he can think of any number of reasons for not completing what he has started."

7. "... a very bright and attractive boy. He is very fine type with artistic tendencies. He is high strung and excitable."

8. "... has shown leadership at times which stands out in sharp contrast with what otherwise has been pretty mediocre activity."

No developmental tasks come shining through in this record. Such records reveal much about each teacher—what she believes in and values, what she wants the children to do and be. They tell us little or nothing about the child.

If we are to compile records that will really be a basis for guiding the individual child and a basis for planning curricular experiences, the teacher must acquire new skills in assembling and interpreting valid data about each child. Section III of this book describes in some detail the techniques and skills teachers may use in obtaining information about children. Once such information is gathered and analyzed, and once the teacher understands which developmental tasks are occupying the child's energy, she may then ask herself what she can do to foster his mental health.

Let us examine some excerpts from the teacher's records on Sam, an eleven-year-old boy in the sixth grade.<sup>8</sup> This case will serve to illustrate two things: first, the type of information and the type of school record which, in contrast to the one of Eric given above, yield valuable and useful information about a child; and second, it serves to illustrate how a child who may seem "difficult" or "a problem" is, in reality, a very well-adjusted child who is working at developmental tasks appropriate to his stage of development.

April 10, 1941: Our class is asked to take part in the minuet dances for the county-wide field day program. Sam said, "I'm not going to be in it." Nobody replied. When we went to the music room and began to play, he didn't participate. . . . Two of the boys and several of the girls said, "I'm glad we were given the minuet again. . . ." Sam said, "I'm not, and I'm not going to be in it."

The problem has now come to a head. Sam's attitude is influencing some of the other boys. If I excuse him it affects the group. I have decided to pass this up, let it rock along until next music time. . . ."

April 12, 1941: Music room day again. Two records were played. Children all participated in the rhythms. Sam was enthusiastic in leading a march; Arnold took his cue each time from Sam and did exactly as he did. The minuet record was put on. All got on the floor but Sam and Arnold; Paul, Calbert, and Carol lagged back and urged Sam to come. We went ahead again without them. . . . The girls . . . went back to the classroom. I put the record on and asked the boys to choose partners. They all participated. We sat

<sup>8</sup> The case of Sam is described in: American Council on Education. *Helping Teachers Understand Children*. Chapter VIII. Washington: American Council on Education, 1945.

down to talk things over together. Sam said, "That's the reason I don't want to be in it. I don't want to take any old girl's hand and dance around. Let boys be partners and I'll be in it." I replied, "Maybe we could do that. Let's think it through. Arnold is your partner. Which one of you will take the girl's part?" It dawned upon them that someone would have to dress as a colonial lady. That was more distasteful than taking the girl's hand. Neither could decide to be the lady. We all had a good laugh.

April 14, 1941: The minuet proceeded today with unanimous participation. Sam was the first boy on the floor, Arnold close on his heels. We did such a good job we decided we need not practice again for quite awhile. . . .

April 20, 1941: We had visitors from a nearby state today. Sam was on the committee to build the puppet theater. He was chairman, had grand ideas about it, and had done a grand job with his group until today. I could tell when he came in that today would not go so well with him. His hair was tousled, his shirt-tail flagging. . . . He went to his work but he didn't care whether the planks he was sawing were measured or not. The boys protested, but he would saw before an agreement was reached. When the precious two-by-four they had had such a hard time getting was an inch too short, he didn't care, he wouldn't help the other boys figure a way out of it.

He dilly-dallied with this and that, leaving his group several times to walk about the room. Finally, the others figured a new way, went to work to saw off the other two-by-four to make it fit with the one Sam had ruined. . . . This group stopped work, talked things over, and they protested that Sam should drop off the committee for today, and let them finish the framework. Sam said that suited him, he didn't want to work with them anyway.

This teacher had taught Sam and his classmates the preceding year also. But during these April days with Sam described above, she soliloquizes:

As I record this at the end of the day I ask myself: What has happened to this reasonable, well-adjusted, and orderly boy I taught as a lad of ten years? Why do the dependable, reliable, orderly co-operative traits, temporarily at least, and in different degrees, disappear? Why is he even aggressive at times toward me? Why is he so loud and boisterous on the playground? Why does he not care if he is so rough that he hurts others? Will I be able to face all of this with understanding and guide him properly through this disintegration period of the pre-adolescent?

The teacher had an array of data from which to draw the inference that he was working on developmental tasks of early adolescence. During the preceding twelve months he had grown five inches in height; during the preceding year, before the marked growth spurt had begun, Sam had been a friendly, cooperative member of the class. The change in behavior accompanied change in growth rate.

Sam in these recorded episodes was concerned with at least two developmental tasks: freeing himself from emotional dependence on adults, and

approaching the problem of making a heterosexual social adjustment. The year before in the fifth grade he had danced the minuet unaware that he was "holding any old girl's hand"; now he is self-conscious, and "doth protest too much."

### **Sharing with Parents and with the Peer Group**

Parents, by virtue of the very experience of being parents, have, by and large, a more clearly defined "developmental" point of view than most teachers. From their years of watching major changes take place in their children they can make contributions to the teacher's understanding. Teachers, on the other hand, have had experience with many children at one or two developmental levels. They can help parents accept the particular pattern of behavior the child is exhibiting and prepare for the child's next steps in working out his developmental tasks. This kind of sharing between parents and teachers is basic if we are to provide the continuity that is essential to the child's integrated development. The question then becomes: What task is the child working at, and how can we collaborate to help him?

Since the peer society is such an important, though unofficial, agency in the education of children in our society, it is time we scrutinized our relations with it. Very few adults have entree there, and often we do not even know that we are excluded. If we are going to use this social organization, if we wish to enrich its culture, we, not the children, are going to have to change. It means that we will have to understand and accept much more of the value systems that are operative in the children's groups. By "accept," we mean accept these codes and behavior patterns as appropriate for them, not for us; certain children eye askance the adult who tries to *be* a child.

### **Curriculum and Developmental Tasks**

The far-reaching question of how the broad curriculum—content, materials, relationships—should be changed to meet the developmental needs of children we cannot answer here. It must be a cooperative venture, as it now is in various schools over the country, with teachers shouldering much of the burden, but with parents sharing in the process, together with specialists in curriculum, child development, and evaluation. Curriculum changes will vary from community to community, and rightly so. But they should all proceed from the common premise that only to the extent that the curriculum *meets* the developmental needs of children can it be a curriculum which fosters the mental health of children.





## PART TWO

# The Child's Motivations

### INTRODUCTION

**W**E USUALLY think of motivation in terms of "getting children to do what we want them to do" through a system of rewards and punishments. We are often unaware of other ways in which children's motivations develop and become elaborated. The first three chapters in Part II deal with three important, though commonly neglected, types of motivation: (a) support of the child's spontaneous interests; (b) encouraging the child's identification with an ideal—a real or imagined person, or a value system; and (c) providing opportunities for participation and belonging in a social unit that is real and important to the child. The fourth chapter in Part II returns us again to questions and problems related to reward and punishment.

The first of these chapters is concerned with "encouraging the child's spontaneous interests" (Chapter Eight). Anyone who has watched a healthy eight-month-old infant has seen his delight in exploring his immediate physical world and his own body, in maneuvering his body, in sharing primitive social intercourse. This same eagerness for exploring, for activity, for relating socially is present in the healthy three- and five- and seven-year-old.

We often hear the elementary-school teacher say: "Isn't it unfortunate that children seem to lose interest at about the third-grade level?" But is motivation really fading? Are these children losing their vivid interest in living? We can say emphatically *no*—not if we watch them on the playground; at the seashore, busily collecting shells; at the airport; or in those classrooms where their developmental needs and spontaneous interests are recognized and built upon. Unfortunately one can walk through miles of orderly, clean, drab classrooms in this country before one comes to one that reveals materials, content, and relationships that are geared to children's spontaneous interests or that would stimulate their important latent interests.

We are inclined to smile sometimes when a boy or girl imitates the gestures, intonation, and the very words of an adult in his immediate environ-



ment. We say he imitates. But why does he? "The child patterns himself after his favorite models" (Chapter Nine) because he wants profoundly to be like, to be a part of, this other person whom he loves or admires. As the child grows older, he often turns to more remote "heroes," models whom he learns about from pictures, stories, comic books, radio, and movies. In late adolescence this same need may find expression in devotion to social causes and political issues. In each case the individual struggles to pattern himself according to some ideal, to identify with this ideal. We have long known about the primary importance of this source of motivation, but we utilize it in a very hit-or-miss fashion in our educational program.

When our society became industrialized there were reverberations on many fronts. One of the changes has been in the declining importance of children and youth in our economy. Children are no longer an asset, no longer persons who become more and more important as they learn new skills useful in the adult world. Actually we try to put our youth into a kind of cold storage, particularly in our secondary schools, "until they graduate or are at least sixteen." This "keeps them off the streets and out of trouble." Schools in the main have not risen to meet this change in our society with the concomitant loss to children of not "participating in shared child-adult activities" (Chapter Ten). One of the reasons why the spontaneous social peer group—the gang, the crowd, the bunch—is so important in the life of the child is that it usually provides for shared planning and for collaboration in enjoyable activity. To a large extent, adults are excluded from these children's groups after the second grade. Our task then seems to be to learn how, in a real sense, to share the school with children. Children tend to think of the school playground as theirs, and of a few of the extracurricular activities as at least partly theirs, but most of what goes on in classrooms belongs to "them," the teachers. If children and youth are to achieve the feeling that "this is *our* classroom where *we* do important things, and where we feel significant because *we* have a large share in the planning and doing," then our schools must undergo marked changes.

"Should the child be motivated through rewards and punishments?" (Chapter Eleven). We sometimes think of rewards as positive, and punishments as negative, processes. But is this always so? If we indicate to a child that he will have our approval for doing just what we want him to do, he may do it and do it well, even though the learning has no intrinsic interest for him and may soon be forgotten. But he may also be learning to "buy" approval of the teacher or to "buy" the affection of the parent. And there is always the threat that he may lose this approval and affection if he fails, with concomitant feelings of deep anxiety. In these ways, rewards may be as "negative" in their effects as punishments are. Rewards for achievement, such as good grades, honor rolls, "gold stars," may only symbolize getting ahead-of-the-others, a way of bolstering one's feelings of

insecurity and inadequacy; they may be unrelated to genuine interest in what is learned.

Probably punishment, even more consistently than reward, produces undesirable by-products—hostility toward authority and toward institutions of our society, deep and lasting distaste for the content of the curriculum, self-images distorted by feelings of inadequacy and guilt.

It is the thesis of Part II that, in getting children to learn what we believe it is important for them to learn, we must develop a broad curriculum that will take account of the spontaneous interests of children, the phenomenon of identification, and the need for participation. If and when such a curriculum is developed, there will be little need for extrinsic rewards and punishments.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# Encouraging the Child's Spontaneous Interests

BERNICE NEUGARTEN AND NELLE WRIGHT

**T**HE spontaneous motives of children must be given a major role in any discussion of motivation. If we are to utilize motivations that are more constructive than extrinsic rewards and punishments, we must, first of all, learn to clarify and to elaborate those interests and those motives which seem to arise spontaneously in the child.

The child has within him, almost from the moment of birth, a strong drive to explore, to manipulate, to touch, to smell, to feel—in short, to learn. We have all observed an infant of six or eight months of age, whose attention is riveted upon some shining or attractive object, and who strains every fiber to reach and examine that object. The infant, before he is able to walk, will inch himself along on his stomach, slowly, yet persistently, in order to grasp that intriguing silver spoon. We have only to watch the child for a few moments to realize how strong within him is the desire to explore the environment.

We see the same basic motivation at other levels of development: the eight-year-old who takes the clock apart and pores over the multitude of tiny pieces, trying to see what makes the clock tick; the four-year-old who pulls the wings off the butterfly and the petals off the flower; the two-year-old who plunges both hands into his dish of food and rubs it between his fingers and between his lips. We see the same curiosity in the area of social relations: the three-year-old who pushes and pokes at another child; the seven-year-old who brings an apple to teacher and who stands shyly by to see what reaction will be forthcoming; the boy entering puberty who makes a point of bumping into girls or of brushing shoulders with them.

We take it so much for granted that this need to explore and to learn operates in the area of ideas and concepts that we often assume that the child will be interested in *anything* new. We proceed to build a curriculum based upon adult concepts of what children are interested in and what

children should learn. We often leave it at that, assuming that the child is naturally curious and will therefore be naturally curious about everything we try to teach.

Yet it is all too clear that such a theory breaks down in practice. Children are, as often as not, interested in something quite different from what the teacher is trying to teach. It is a widespread observation that many children begin to dislike school by the time they reach the third grade, and that they never recapture their earlier enthusiasm. Part of the difficulty lies in the fact that our schools often fail to teach children what they most want to learn, or what they are most ready to learn.

The child's curiosity is selective. At different stages of development, the boy or girl will have different preoccupations and different curiosities. If schools are to provide the optimum learning situation, and if schools are to provide the conditions of good mental health, the curriculum must take into account the natural interests and motivations of the child. A teacher will not fret about how to motivate her group of children if she presents content that meets their spontaneous interests.

This does not mean that the strictly "child-centered" curriculum is our goal; but it does mean that if we are to succeed in leading children to our goal, we must begin where the child *is*. A good curriculum will take as its points of departure children's interests as well as children's abilities.

How shall we encourage the child's spontaneous interests? There are at least three aspects of the problem. The first is to be sensitive to the developmental tasks and preoccupations of children at various stages of development.<sup>1</sup> This should be our major consideration, for it will determine the broad outlines of the curriculum and will enable us to deal successfully with the majority of children at given developmental levels. As our knowledge of normal development increases, we shall be able to predict with more assurance the types of curricular experiences which will be most appropriate and most appealing to the child as he progresses from one developmental level to the next. Within this aspect of the problem, we would be concerned with such questions as "What are the most commonly shared interests of children in the period of late childhood? early adolescence?" "What types of content and what types of activities will appeal to the natural interests of children at any given level of development?"

The second aspect of the problem is to capitalize upon those spontaneous interests which arise, not so much from the developmental tasks shared by all children, as from those unique experiences or events which occur within the environment, a discrete experience shared by members of a classroom—

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapters Six and Seven.



*Battle Creek, Michigan, Public Schools*

***"We ought to discuss about boys and girls. That's the main topic we talk about anyway."***

a community celebration, a local election, a new playground. The wise teacher will utilize such spontaneous group interests and will make of them opportunities for constructive learning. In doing so, she will be expanding the limits of the classroom.

The third aspect is to provide a variety of stimulating materials and experiences which children are free to explore, thereby offering the child opportunities to develop *latent* interests.

These aspects of the problem will be discussed in the sections that follow.

### **The Child's Interests at Successive Developmental Stages**

As has been pointed out in Chapter Seven, an understanding of the developmental tasks faced by children at successive levels of maturity will undoubtedly lead to a re-examination and a re-formulation of school curriculums. We may consider a few examples in which children's spontaneous interests arise from particular developmental tasks and can be utilized in providing constructive curricular experiences.

In one high-school social studies class a discussion was under way as to how the group might best spend its time. The teacher asked for suggestions, saying, "I'd like you to feel free to make your own suggestions and we'll look at them all and see which ones we'd like to do best."

Richard said, "We ought to come in here and discuss about boys and girls. That's the main topic we talk about anyway."

"Sure," said Bob, "that's the main topic of all. Every time we start on a topic that's the way it always ends up."

Peg added her opinion. "We could discuss and get the opinions of all the mothers as to how late the boys and girls should stay out."

"How many dates should you have each week?" asked Elsie.

"Is it smart to go steady? That's a good topic," said Bill.

"Etiquette and behavior at socials. Why not that one?" Arthur interjected.

The teacher accepted these suggestions and continued the discussion to allow the members of the group to clarify and elaborate upon them. She helped the group to plan the next few meetings. The group spent several sessions discussing dating, going steady, what hour to come in at night, how to talk things over with parents, and so on. Several students undertook to read recent books on the topic and reported on them to class; others interviewed parents and summarized their opinions; three persons wrote essays on the topic for publication in the school newspaper. A round-table discussion between students and parents was planned on the topic, "What hours should tenth-graders keep?"

From there, the group went on to the question of manners and etiquette. The class period was used to discuss and practice everyday situations which involved "good manners." There was keen interest shown by every member of the group.

This example, which could be duplicated in many schools, illustrates several things: that a teacher who is sympathetic and permissive creates a psychological situation in which boys and girls are free to express their interests and preoccupations;<sup>2</sup> that the spontaneous interests which accompany various developmental levels may be utilized in planning worthwhile curricular content; and that "motivating" the pupil becomes unnecessary when the school can meet the pupil's real interests.

At grade levels beyond kindergarten and first grade, any classroom is likely to include children of two or more developmental stages. It may be impossible to accommodate the interests of all the group in planning any single unit of work, even when the attempt is being made to plan according to developmental tasks. Yet many topics can be treated in such a way as to appeal to children who are at different stages of maturity. For example, a study unit on physical growth taught in the seventh, eighth, or ninth grades will undoubtedly be of great interest to all the members of a class—those in late childhood, those in early adolescence, and those who have completed puberty. If such a unit contains information regarding the pubertal growth spurt, individual differences in growth patterns, variations in the onset and duration of the growth spurt, discussion of "normality," and so on, the content is sure to be meaningful to everyone in the group; and the motivation will be the child's own interests.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter Eighteen, "Accepting and Clarifying the Child's Feelings."

In many instances, where there are different developmental levels present in any one group, certain children will require curricular experiences different from those of the majority.

Realizing that the activities in the sixth grade were failing to meet the needs of several older girls, the principal and teachers made a study of the curriculum offerings as a basis for improving the situation. As they considered the girls' homes and social backgrounds, their scholastic, physical, and emotional development, it was evident that the regular school program had little interest or functional value for these overage girls. Many in this group would be in school for only a limited time; they would go to work as soon as they became sixteen. Through visits to the homes, conferences with other teachers, examination of past records, and daily observations, the teachers obtained information about the actual needs of these pupils. The girls wanted to know how to beautify their homes, to sew, to serve a balanced meal, to practice good grooming, to be socially acceptable.

The homemaking teacher and the classroom teacher worked together to provide suitable experiences in good grooming. The first experience was a trip to a beauty parlor where one of the girls was given a shampoo and another a manicure, while the others listened to an explanation of the steps in each. The girls put the information gained in this trip to practical use by setting up one corner of the homemaking room for shampoos and manicures where they worked on improvement in personal appearance.

This activity led to a desire to know what types of clothing were appropriate for various occasions, and what colors were most becoming to each individual. Two of the girls went to the school library to consult books on grooming; two others made it their job to consult fashion magazines for articles on color combinations, hair styles, dress fashions appropriate to teen-agers, and so on. Group discussions were lively.

The girls then decided to try to make clothes for themselves. They were given experience in sewing, including the use of simple patterns, the use of the sewing machine, and certain steps in cutting and putting together various articles of clothing. The girls made slips, blouses, and skirts.

Later, the group turned its attention to making improvements in their homes. A number learned to use flour and feed sacks in making scarfs, tea towels, and pillow slips. One girl undertook to make new curtains for her living-room; another, slipcovers for an armchair.

This is, of course, but one example of a principle now generally accepted in our schools—that curricular programs must be flexible if we are to meet the needs of individual children and special groups of children. We have been tardy in recognizing, however, a corollary to this principle, namely, that the special needs of one child in the group may be the direct reflection of that child's developmental level. Many a "special" child is "special" only because he is at a different stage of normal development than the others



in his classroom. This, in turn, suggests that if groupings more flexible than chronological age-groupings could be tried out in our schools, many "special children" might no longer be "special."

### Interests Arising from Unique Events

In discussing the relation of developmental tasks to children's spontaneous interests, we have been saying that the child's interests are determined by the changes which are going on within him. The child's interests are also determined by the stimulation he receives from his environment.

Often the teacher is presented with ready-made opportunities for curricular experiences based upon unique events in the environment.

A tree grew outside a fourth-grade window. One spring, birds built their nest in this tree. Eagerly the children watched the birds, the nest, the eggs. The teacher seized upon this spontaneous interest and used it in planning a unit of work. The birds and trees were used in science, in creative writing, and in art. The children were encouraged to use many media of expression.

Some of their activities were: to keep daily charts of inside temperature and outside temperature; to compare the kinds of animal and plant life in different climates; to study reproductive processes among birds and animals; to study the feeding and care of birds. The children made drawings, clay models, and wrote sentences and songs related to the cycle of events occurring outside the window: the tree has green leaves in summer, bare limbs in autumn; the sap subsides; the tree sleeps; the winter comes; the spring returns; the birds return; robins build a nest; eggs are laid; young birds are hatched; and so on.

The children's drawings and some of their writings were put together in a large roll of paper, and by using a wooden box as "projector," an exciting "movie" plan was developed. The group showed their home-made movie to several other groups of children in the school.

In utilizing the bird and tree incident, this teacher had succeeded in pushing back the walls of the classroom, so as to take advantage of a stimulating experience in the physical environment of the children.

We recognize, of course, that there are always limits in any school situation—factors which limit the degree to which teachers can utilize the children's spontaneous interests and motives. There are the physical limits of the school building and of the classroom. There are limits set by the length of the school year, and by the desire to achieve certain skills and learnings during that year. The expectations of parents, children, and other school personnel all place limits on the freedom of the teacher and her pupils. Some of these limits can, however, be made less rigid; others can be expanded.

The physical limits of the classroom can be modified in several ways. One is by presenting children with many different objects, pictures, tools,

and materials, which they can see, manipulate, and ask questions about. The children should feel free to bring into the classroom anything that is of interest to them, whether it be a very expensive toy or a caterpillar found on the way to school.

Making greater use of the community and community activities as a basis for curriculum construction is another way to expand the four walls of the classroom. The example which follows shows how a community activity was used in one first-grade group.

On their way to school a number of children in this group passed a site where an excavation was being dug for a large office building. Each day they reported to the class on the progress being made by the construction workers. When they said that bleachers had been set up for observers, class interest was great. The group decided that everyone should go to see the steam shovel. On their return the children wrote stories and poems about the steam shovel, drew pictures, and some even attempted construction of a steam shovel.

The steam shovel was followed by a very noisy pile-driver, which was again reported. The class went over to see and hear the pile-driver in action. Again there were many activities based on this trip. Unfortunately the school year ended at about this time; otherwise the group might have gone on with the building theme as one focus of their school curriculum.

The foregoing description illustrates how a community activity can provide the basis for constructive curricular experience. In the example to follow, a unit of work which grew out of seventh-graders' spontaneous interests in a dramatization was utilized in somewhat the reverse fashion—to stimulate pupils' interest in the community.

As a result of witnessing the dramatization of "The Lost Colony," a number of seventh-grade pupils became interested in the early life and customs of their own community. The teacher reminded the pupils that their city, a large industrial center, was near the scene of a bloody battle fought during the Civil War. This fact challenged their interest still further, and they raised a number of questions about their community. The group chose, as a problem for long-time study, the growth and development of their city.

The children found unlimited sources of information. Interviews with older citizens served as learning experiences. A study of old records, maps, newspapers, and pictures served as a background for comparing the old and new community. The children began to appreciate the many improvements which had been made in homes, health, safety, transportation, communication, recreational and cultural opportunities from the time of their forefathers to the present. Class excursions were taken to the old homes, churches, the court house, manufacturing plants, the bank, the newspaper plant, and other places of interest. Information obtained from these trips led to worthwhile classroom activities. Many persons of the community came to talk to the class. The post office and telephone and trucking companies sent bulletins giving information of value.

As a final activity, the group prepared a booklet on the history and development of the community. Copies were placed in the public library and in the school libraries. Adults who were authorities on the history of the community became interested and added to the pupils' information. A planning committee composed of pupils, faculty, and other adults was responsible for placing additional historical markers in the city, and for planning other ways of informing people about their community.

The wise teacher will often capitalize upon unique events which occur within the classroom itself and will build her curriculum about them.

In one fourth-grade group, the teacher was notified that routine physical examinations were to be given to the children in her group in three weeks. The teacher discussed the forthcoming event with her class. The children raised a great many questions: "What will they do to us?" "Are your parents supposed to come?" "What is a stethoscope?" "Will they examine our tonsils?" "What is meant by blood pressure?" "What materials will they bring along?" "Will they use the X-ray?" "Will they examine us for tuberculosis?" "How much would such an examination cost?" and so on.

Here was a ready-made opportunity for a unit of schoolwork based on intrinsic motivation! Every child was interested; and some did not hesitate to express their anxieties and confusions over bodily functions, physical examinations, health, and doctors.

The learning activities which resulted were many and varied. The children used reference books; they looked up medical terms and explained them to the class. A few boys and girls made reports on special health topics; the school nurse visited the classroom twice and talked about good health practices and the children planned the schedule for the examinations.

There may be some feeling that following a program based on children's interests will not provide opportunity to learn the so-called "basic" skills, i.e., arithmetic and reading skills, concepts of science, and so on. It is possible that this would sometimes be the case, but the feeling on the part of many educators is that the learnings which are real to the child will usually provide for such skills.<sup>3</sup>

Let us consider two examples, both involving curricular experiences based upon the children's spontaneous interests, and see if they offer opportunity for the child to develop standard academic skills:

A group of third graders had been given a party by their mothers. Some time later they began to talk about doing something for their mothers in return. There was cooking equipment in the room, but the children had never tried anything very elaborate in the way of cooking. Nevertheless, they decided upon a luncheon.

The teacher felt that this was a very real interest and helped the children in their planning. In the planning period, each child was

<sup>3</sup> Kelley, Earl C. *Education for What Is Real*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947. p. 57-72.

given time to talk about the project and to see the importance of his contribution; he was helped to be self-directing. The youngsters prepared the entire luncheon, complete with yeast rolls, salad, a hot dish, place-cards, and place-mats.

Into this experience were woven science (yeast and its action), nutrition, arithmetic (quantities to be purchased, measuring), art, and social studies (living with one's parents and peers). In this situation the teacher was working with children who seemed really motivated and whose learnings will probably be lasting.

In another classroom of second graders, Mary was absent from school one day. John and Tom were absent, too. After roll call, Sally said, "I'd like to write a letter to Mary today." Others said they would like to write to John and Tom.

The teacher asked, "Would you like to write now?" The response was enthusiastic, and the children began to write letters. The teacher assisted them with words they couldn't spell, and these words were written on the board.

"But how are we going to deliver these letters?" Phillip asked. "We can't deliver them ourselves because John lives too far away; if we mailed them, the kids would be back in school before they got their letters."

Out of the discussion which followed came the idea for building a post office in their own room. The post office would be used to exchange letters, Christmas cards, and Valentines.

Plans were made, and a list of materials which would be needed was written on the board.

*"We built a post office in our own room."*

*Tulsa, Oklahoma, Public Schools*



Each child brought in the materials he could furnish and shared them with the group. Individual mail boxes were made from old shoe boxes—a flap was cut out in front, forming a concealed window on which the box numbers were written; the back end of the box was cut out to provide space for entering mail. The name of the person and box number were written on each.

Each child chose a color and painted his own post office box. Cracker boxes were painted and used as containers for stamps. Stamps in various denominations were made and used. A cash register was devised.

While the construction was under way, a list of stories dealing with letters and companionship was compiled from the library. The list included such titles as "Susan's Neighbors," "We Grow Up," "Good Companions," "Here Comes the Postman," "Billy's Letter," and "City and Country."

When the *Weekly Readers* came, the children were delighted to find stories about the newest and fastest methods of mail travel. Some members of the group painted pictures of trains, airplanes, buses, and boats. These paintings were used to decorate the front of the post office building.

Arithmetic problems were developed. "Gene needs two 1¢ stamps, and one 3¢ stamp. How much money does he need?"

As letter writing progressed, much emphasis was placed upon the proper way to write a letter and to address the envelopes. Form letters were made and posted for reference. Punctuation was discussed and illustrated. There was constant interest in learning to spell new words.

Individuals took turns being the postman. Special hours were posted for opening and closing of the post office. Mail bags, made from orange sacks, were used by mailmen for delivering mail to other classrooms.

As this activity progressed, it was found that a wide range of subject-matter had been integrated into this learning experience. Social skills in connection with sharing and accepting responsibilities were learned. Art, reading, spelling, arithmetic, music, and current events seemed to have real meaning for each child.

Similar examples can be drawn from every grade level. Does it not seem likely that "tool subjects" will be learned, and *better* learned, when they are related to the child's real interests and to his real motivations?

### Helping the Child Develop Latent Interests

In some instances, the teacher's problem is not so much that of utilizing the child's spontaneous interests and motives. It is rather the problem of helping children to *develop* interests and motivations. This is particularly true of those boys and girls who, for one reason or another, have had meager experiences, and who have not had opportunities for exploring wide areas of activity.

A woman was speaking recently of her lack of appreciation for music:

I grew up in a family where none of us had any interest in music. I never heard any music at home, and I never cared. But I can remember as if it were yesterday something which happened to me in school one day. We were supposed to learn to sing, it seems, and I wasn't sure if I wanted to or not. The idea began to appeal to me, though, as the boys and girls around me followed the teacher's lead and began a song about spring and the sunshine.

But it didn't turn out so well. The teacher walked up and down the aisles, listening to each of us. As she came near, I decided to sing loud, if not well. So I gave it everything I had. When she came to me, she stopped, shuddered, and said, "Ugh! Don't sing—you're spoiling it all."

And I didn't sing—not from that time to now.

Suppose we contrast this woman's experience with the experience the children in the following school are having:

A group of our elementary-school teachers, in reviewing the school program in light of its opportunities for the well-rounded development of children, found that the music experiences were limited, both in the amount of time devoted to them and in the variety of activities. One objective for the year, therefore, was to increase opportunities for music activities for all children throughout the school.

In the primary classrooms where only rote-singing had been practiced, the program was enriched by introducing a rhythm band. Children and teachers together talked about instruments which could be made. Once children got the idea that they could use their own initiative in experimenting with the use of objects that would produce pleasing sounds, they began looking for things to bring from home. Tin tops, horseshoes, nails, coffee cans, combs, wood blocks, bottles, toy drums, and rattles of different kinds were found; and youngsters began trying their skill at constructing instruments which could be used for making music. In time, every youngster had some instrument of his own and the groups began playing together by following rhythm band arrangements.

The individuals in the groups began to develop skills through frequent band playings. Some found it easy to sing while playing. Some developed a real feeling for rhythm. By the end of the year the children were making arrangements of their own and no longer followed only the ready-made rhythm band arrangements. Singing became a major activity. Many singing games, in and out of school, were enjoyed. In some classrooms, children listened to recordings of music by well-known composers and to a variety of types of music.

The enjoyment of these activities inspired children to put words to familiar tunes, and later to create tunes of their own. The children were given many opportunities to respond to music through creative dancing. The value of this activity was evidenced at a spring music



festival during the second year of the program. All participants were given an opportunity to engage in a creative interpretation of a musical selection. Parents and teachers noted the grace, poise, rhythm, and creativeness of the children.

Through this music program which included listening, singing, dancing, creating, and the playing of instruments, each child was helped to find a way through which he could enjoy musical activity.

Some children who showed creative ability in music actually became better adjusted in other work. One little girl who had not succeeded at all in any other classroom activity suddenly began to read with her group after dancing had been introduced in her classroom. Up to that time she had been timid and shy; but when the children danced, she joined them. She was so graceful that her ability was recognized by other children.

We have all seen children who, having had no previous contact with art or music or nature, develop avid interest in these activities when offered the opportunity to do so. This is an example at an obvious level; yet the good teacher is constantly aware of this principle and makes use of it in less obvious instances—the city child whose experiences with plants and animals have been limited and the child whose experiences with creative media have been limited.

Nor is this a matter of studying each child intensively and of deciding what his undeveloped abilities or talents may be. It is rather a matter of providing a rich and stimulating variety of materials within the classroom, materials which the children are free to explore in their own ways. It is one thing to discover hidden genius; it is another thing to try to enrich the environments of all the children within a group. The classroom that is rich in opportunities to learn is not the bare and scrupulously neat classroom that is to be found in many of our schools.

### Summary

The most intrinsic motivation for learning is the child's spontaneous interests. The forward-looking and progressive school is the school which capitalizes upon this type of motivation wherever possible, and which utilizes the child's real interests as a point of departure in building constructive learning experiences. Much of the problem of "motivating" the child will disappear as we learn to bridge the gap between those things which the child *should* learn and those things which the child *wants* to learn.



## CHAPTER NINE

# The Child Patterns Himself After His Favorite Models

ROBERT PECK

**W**HAT makes an American child American? If the same child were born and raised in France, he would think, feel, and act like a Frenchman. Growing up in Middletown or Jonesville, U. S. A., however, it is important that he do things as his fellow Americans do. It is this process by which a child, raised in a particular family in a particular society, comes to accept and believe in its way of life, that we call "identification." This is a deceptively short word to describe the complex process by which we all come to be like, and want to be like, the other people we know. Normally the child's basic identification is with one or both parents, but there is identification, also, with the ways of thinking and acting of certain other individuals outside the family.

Originally, an identification is formed with a particular person. The very young child wants to be "just like mommy" or "just like daddy," in every way. Fairly early in life, however, the child comes to identify with specific values represented by certain people. When this happens, he no longer wants simply to be like so-and-so in general, but wants to be the kind of person so-and-so is in specific ways. There is a difference between wanting to be "just like daddy," and wanting to be "strong, like daddy; and nice to people, like mommy; and honest, like Mr. Jones."

### The Nature of Identification

In George Mead's terms, the child learns to see himself as a separate, distinct being as he comes to understand how others regard him. He builds up his picture of what he is by seeing what other people think he is. Thus a child whose parents want, love, and respect him in the first years, later believes himself to be a lovable, worthwhile person. In the process, the child obviously must learn from the specific people around him. Needing



*Denver, Colorado, Public Schools*

*The individual learns to see himself as a human being as he comes to understand how others regard him.*

their approval and support for sheer survival, he generally adopts ways of behaving of which they approve. While his own needs are always paramount, he comes to judge the things he does from their point of view. In short, he identifies with their outlook.

This is no process of imitation whereby the child imitates specific and discrete behaviors in order to achieve an immediate goal. As far as we can tell, it is largely an unconscious process of coming to "feel like" the "model" person with whom he identifies and to perceive situations in the same way the "model" perceives them. Often there is imitation of specific mannerisms or attitudes, but these are the *result* of the child's identification; they are not the basis of the identification.

Identification is determined by the power of the model to provide satisfaction; yet satisfaction is a highly variable element. Basically, children seem to identify either because of love or fear, or a combination of both. The mother who makes her child feel comfortable and happy encourages identification with her, because the child's experience indicates that behavior like the mother's produces pleasant results. A severe, domineering mother can also effect identification. In this case the child assumes her standards because he fears the punishment he receives whenever he departs from them. The latter, of course, is an effective way to rear children who will be fearful, covertly hostile, and afraid of change.

Most of us probably foster identification by a combination of love and fear. We hope that the positive love outweighs the negative fear, and we do the best we can with the deeply fixed attitudes we ourselves have learned in our own youth.

Usually the child identifies primarily with the parent who exercises the dominant power for reward and punishment in the home. Whatever they may be like specifically, the patterns for handling life problems and the scale of values that the child adopts in the first six or seven years persist throughout life.

Superficially, dramatic changes occur; basically, one's approach to life remains more or less constant. Joe at six wants to be a fireman; at twelve, a flier; and at fifteen, a great trial-lawyer. Yet at every age he is showing the same pattern of ambition for achievement, public recognition, and social prestige. Helen may idealize motherhood, teaching, and nursing at successive ages, but running throughout is her constant emphasis on the importance of close, warm, personal relations, to be secured by serving others.

There is another element, however. The child not only identifies with his model's way of behaving, usually in a deeply unconscious fashion, but he also accepts the model's definition of what he, the child, should be. Such expectations may fit well with the child's behavior pattern. If they are incongruent, however, the discrepancy between "what I am" and "what I ought to be" can put the child in a painful dilemma.

Sally B. is a case in point. She thought the world of her successful, dominant father who was a doctor. Unconsciously she identified strongly with him, showed many of his ways of dealing with people, and even had a half-formed ambition to become a doctor. At puberty, however, she received a rude shock. Her father expected women to be quiet, unassertive, and thoroughly "feminine." She had not been aware of this until she reached the age when it became an active issue in her father's eyes. Because she wanted to be like her father, and yet to be what he expected of her, she had a turbulent four years before she finally struck a compromise that she could live by.<sup>1</sup>

### Identifications Change as Children Grow

Sally's case illustrates another major point. While in a broad fashion identifications persist, in another very real sense they must change in certain ways as the child grows older. Perhaps we adults are all too humanly inconsistent. We may encourage a five-year-old boy to be sweet, docile,

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Thelma P. Lilienthal contributed valuable time and effort in gathering the case material, and in discussing the major points that are included in this chapter.

and compliant; three years later we are alarmed if he is not independent, self-assertive, and thoroughly able to take care of himself in the rough-and-tumble boys' world.

Certainly, as boys and girls grow, they must change their picture of themselves to conform to what others expect of them at successive age levels. A ten-year-old is completely different in muscular coordination, breadth of experience, and social awareness, from a five-year-old. A post-pubescent fourteen-year-old has literally a different kind of body from the one he had a year or two before. If the child is to make a healthy, realistic adjustment to bodily changes and to shifts in what others expect of him, it is imperative that he adapt his attitudes to such new conditions. What sort of interests to have, how to behave toward other girls and boys, how to spend one's time—these must be progressively altered.

Healthy children do change in just this way. There seems to be a sort of developmental sequence in the kinds of people with whom they identify. While this sequence should not be expected to occur in a neat, precise fashion for all children at the same time, it does occur in most cases.<sup>2</sup>

The first ideal models are the parents, or other relatives of the older generation. Jackson, a six-year-old first grader, is a case in point. He seemed to be trying constantly to act like a "big man." He had a suave air, walked erectly, and was always drawing pictures of race horses. "My daddy loves prize horses," he once said.

<sup>2</sup> Havighurst, Robert J.; Robinson, Myra Z.; Dorr, Mildred. "The Development of the Ideal Self in Childhood and Adolescence," *Journal of Educational Research* 40:241-57; December 1946.

*The child's experiences with others in school help shape his personality.*

Denver, Colorado, Public Schools



One day his teacher met this Daddy, and was taken aback as she realized what a "realistic duplicate" young Jackson was. "Their eyes, their smile, their movements, and posture were identical." Mr. Jackson, Sr., was well aware of the resemblance and much pleased with it. All about the Jackson home were pictures of race horses.

At the age of six or seven, the child's pattern of identification begins to include teachers or other parent-like adults. David is an eleven-year-old in the sixth grade. The teacher writes, "David was chewing gum in class again, though he knew he wasn't supposed to do it. I thought it over for a minute, then smiled and said to him, 'Do you have any more gum?' Seriously, he said, 'Yes, Miss Gray, do you want some?' bringing a package from his pocket. His eyes were as big as saucers. He handed it to me. I took a piece, thanked him, and said, 'I'm not going to chew mine in school.' With that remark he took his gum out of his mouth and threw it in the wastebasket." Identifying with the teacher, David wanted to be like her. This motive outweighed his desire for gum.

By eight or ten years of age, children usually find glamorous hero-figures attractive. Boys may want to be like Dick Tracy, a cowboy movie-star, a famous flier, or perhaps a tough gangster in the Humphrey Bogart tradition. (Rough, contemptuous treatment of women, incidentally, is typical pre-adolescent behavior in boys.) Girls may ape the hair-do, manner, and attitudes of a noted female movie-star. These types of identification are usually outgrown by the age of fifteen or sixteen.

Cynthia, age ten, who is very unhappy and insecure, illustrates a strong attempt to identify with someone who is powerful, even if only in a make-believe world. Her mother "is mean to her," favors a younger brother instead. Cynthia is always fighting with the girls in her class, yet she cries when they exclude her from their play. She tells her teacher, "My greatest wish is that I was pretty and that everyone liked me."

Some time later the teacher writes, "Cynthia acted queerly today. Over the week-end she had seen the movie *Jungle Woman* in which an ape was changed into a beautiful woman, and today she acted the part—all day. She sat stiffly at her desk with her arms thrust stiffly by her sides. She rolled her eyes in a wild fashion and opened them very wide. When she walked it was in the same stiff manner. She didn't say a word to any one of the children. When I called on her for a question she either said nothing or mumbled an unintelligible answer."

Then, two days later, "Cynthia is still acting the part of the jungle woman. She told me today that she was going to start wearing a sunbonnet so that her hair will get darker and some of the freckles will disappear, and ended by saying, 'I wish I could turn into a jungle woman just like in the show.'

She boasted at noon that no one could beat her and that she was stronger than the rest of the girls." Next day, "Cynthia plays the jungle woman part in class, and all the attention of the class is called to her antics. She wants to be called Paula. That was the name of the Jungle Woman."

The teacher tells Cynthia that she must try not to act this way any longer, and Cynthia does try to stop it, but finds it difficult. "I wish I had never seen the show," she cries. The fact that this movie-figure had such a hold on the child is testimony to her need to identify with somebody, *anybody*, who appears to have successful ways of living a good life. Cynthia didn't find such a person at home, but she had to find someone somewhere. An understanding teacher might have promoted a more realistic, satisfying identification, perhaps with herself.

The next stage, which may start anywhere from ten to sixteen years, is that of admiring and wishing to be like an attractive young adult whom the child knows personally. Fourteen-year-old Jerry writes, "When I am twenty-one, I would like to be like Coach Nelson. He is a lot of fun, and knows a lot about cars and machines, not only sports. He always makes us play fair and you can trust him. If he promises something he does it. He is tall and has brown hair and laughs a lot."

The most advanced stage, perhaps ideally the one all children should reach by late adolescence, is that of forming a composite picture of the person one wants to be like. No longer does the child choose one person as the ideal to be imitated. Instead, he takes certain qualities from a variety of people he has known, adds some that no one person represents, and emerges with his own unique pattern of the kind of person he wants to be.

Sixteen-year-old Mary Jane writes, "When I was small I had several idols. That is, people whom I would want to be like when I grew up. One was a nurse, another a doctor, a movie-star, one of my aunts, my brother, and I suppose there were lots more. But now I have no desire to be like anyone in particular at all. Maybe it's because I'm older and know now that no one is perfect, that everyone has good and bad points, or maybe I've just changed my mind. I think that you, as an individual, should be individual. Not to the extent of disregarding the morals and laws of society. I don't mean that, but what I mean is be yourself. Everyone, I don't care who it is, has something that no one else has, and he shouldn't try to hide it by imitating others."

It must be emphasized that the whole process of identification is not a matter of the child slavishly losing himself in imitation of the chosen model. Rather, it is the evolution of an increasingly complex concept of self. Indeed, as a mentally healthy, socially effective human being, the child



takes over attitudes and behaviors from others only as parts which he fits into his own individual pattern for dealing with life. It is precisely because in our American society we value the adult who can live independently, governing himself, judging himself, and taking final responsibility for his own actions, that we not only recognize but wish to encourage this direction of growth. If we found our young men and women blindly seeking some "leader" whose goals and dictates they could accept without question—without individual, thoughtful weighing of the things worth working toward in life, and the means to be used to realize them—finding this, we would be worried, and rightly so. Such blind acceptance of an authoritative model, whether he be a political figure, a military man, or even a teacher, would signify a serious breakdown in our system of guiding children toward self-reliant, self-respecting citizenship in a democracy.

### What the Child Brings to School

When Sue and Dick come into class on the first day of school, they are already distinct, definite personalities in their own right. They have learned to fit in as members of their family and as members of their play groups. Because it is pleasantly rewarding to do this, they have already accepted many of the beliefs of their home and neighborhood, without being aware of it at all. They have already strongly identified with the "right" ways to behave, as their parents and friends see it.

If Sue's parents think that school is important, that learning to read and write is necessary and desirable, then Sue is apt to believe this, too, and without even thinking about it. Whether or not she likes to get up early in the morning to go to school, she will do it. Any protest merely masks the fact that basically she knows she should and will go to school. When she gets to school, she will be eager to read—unless, of course, she is discouraged by dull or meaningless material. In short, she has already identified with many of the things her teachers believe in. She is prepared to learn because she feels that learning and academic achievement are important.

Dick may come to school with a different outlook on life. Perhaps he comes from a farm-family, where time spent in school is time taken from essential chores. If his family doesn't see much value in schooling, and if he has identified with his family in the normal way, then Dick probably doesn't think much of school either. What his teacher wants him to do doesn't make sense to him. He just doesn't see life as she does. In other words, he does not identify with his teacher's point of view.

Clearly, the teacher is not responsible for the attitudes Sue and Dick bring with them on their first day. However, if she is to help them learn, she will have to take these beliefs into account. The problem with Sue is



to continue to provide satisfying experiences, both in achievement and in personal relations. There is only a small gap to bridge here, until Sue comes to accept and identify with the teacher in activities not specifically taught at home. As we will see later, she will not identify completely with her teacher. Many of her loyalties and interests lie with her friends.

Dick presents a different kind of problem. Stated simply, unless he finds some reason to change his identifications in part, and to see things as his teacher does, he is going to learn very little indeed. Unless he comes to share to some degree the teacher's belief that school learning "makes sense," he is not likely to exert himself in the classroom. Or if he does, he may do so only to escape punishment of some sort.

The whole point is, of course, that Dick, and all school children, will benefit from the school situation to the extent that they can incorporate into their own lives the values inherent in that situation, and to the extent that they can accept their teachers—to some extent, at least—as models.

### Identification and Mental Health

As the case-illustrations testify, identification involves a great deal of deep emotion. It is this very fact that makes identification a prime factor in motivating human behavior. Strong emotion guarantees that learning will be effective; not only subjectmatter learning, to be sure, but learning and reinforcing of attitudes toward the purposes of the school, and the people who represent these purposes. If the teacher were to attack Dick's belief that chores and home responsibilities are important, it would be a sure way to teach him that school is a place to be distrusted, or even hated. He has to be "sold" on the idea that school does not displace but supplements his work at home; and it has to be honestly true, or he won't "buy" the idea.

Since so much emotion is involved here, one must consider the intense conflicts which often arise when the child is required to identify with two opposing standards. Whenever an established pattern of identification encounters a demand for change, there is bound to be strong feeling involved. For example, even in the normal course of physical growth, the child needs to alter old identifications to suit a "new" adolescent body and the new expectations of people around him. This creates at best a passing problem; at worst, a conflict situation of real proportion. It probably would be far less conflicting, to be sure, if our society did not make such shifting and contradictory demands on adolescents. Nevertheless, it is a normal hazard for all American children, who must give up the old child-gang where boys and girls have little to do with each other, and become members of boy-girl crowds where close, friendly cooperation is demanded. They must take a new set of heroes and a new set of beliefs in what to

do and how to do it. Changes such as this involve real emotional strain, even if it is temporary.

More difficult of solution is the conflict that may be waged for years between two different sets of values. Many children who identify with working-class parents, who themselves have found book learning of little use, often find themselves in a school where book learning is of primary importance. Such children literally do not see the world in the same way their teacher may see it. The teacher has a difficult task at best in understanding a viewpoint so different from her own, and unless she can succeed in getting such children to identify with some of her aims, there is apt to be open, unresolved conflict. Each side may misunderstand or misinterpret the other's words and actions. The problem is not without its effect on the mental health of both pupils and teacher.

Perhaps the most universal form of this dilemma is the discrepancy between the peer group and the adult world in America.<sup>3</sup> Everyone takes it for granted that children, in giving allegiance to their age-mates, will "naturally" run counter to adult wishes many times. This is not necessarily the product of unchangeable "human nature," as studies of other societies indicate. But it is certainly true of our own society. What is happening? Each child must identify partly with the teacher's standards if he is to remain in school at all. At the same time, he must identify with the code of his age-mates, often in opposition to the adult code. While we learn to expect such "normal" conflict, it does not lessen its reality.

Probably the least successful solution a child can make is to identify with one side exclusively. The boy or girl who identifies wholly with the teacher is especially headed for trouble. If he fails to develop adequate ways of getting along with age-mates, he is all too likely to be left stranded when he reaches adulthood. As an adult, he will not find guides who are older or wiser than he; and he will not have learned to get along with his peers, who are now the ruling adults of his society.

### What Teachers Can Do

All these are problems involving identification. To most of these problems, there are no easy answers. However, recent research in non-directive counseling, in group therapy, and indeed in all the sound experimental teaching that is going on in many schools, suggests a general approach which may slowly resolve some of the major difficulties now encountered.

First, if we are to enlist a positive identification on the child's part, it is essential to recognize and understand the identifications he brings with him when he comes to school. The depths of his feelings must be humanly,

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter Three, "Children Teach Each Other."

not just intellectually, appreciated. Fortunately, there are ways of learning to do this, though they cannot be communicated by simple formula, nor can they be learned overnight.

A major step is to learn to recognize what a particular child is feeling at a particular moment. The next step is to accept his right to have any and all feelings, however we may limit his behavior. The third step is to show the child that we are sincerely trying to understand exactly how he feels.<sup>4</sup>

This approach, so simple to write about and so difficult to do, has several advantages. It is the best way of coming to understand the child, and at the same time it frees him from having to maintain a defensive position. It permits him to "be himself," to accept the feelings he has without being guilty about those feelings. It must be emphasized that this is a way of freeing the child to accept his inevitable emotional reactions; it is *not* to free him to *act* without self-restraint.

Such an attitude opens the way for the child to identify with the teacher's values, for now the teacher becomes an important source of reassurance and an aid to self-respect. There are few more potent "rewards." If, however, this is done insincerely to maneuver the child into accepting school standards, it is bound to fail. If the interest in the child is genuine, even though it is expressed in occasional thirty-second periods, it increases the likelihood that he will want to learn—and *will* learn—what the teacher hopes to teach.

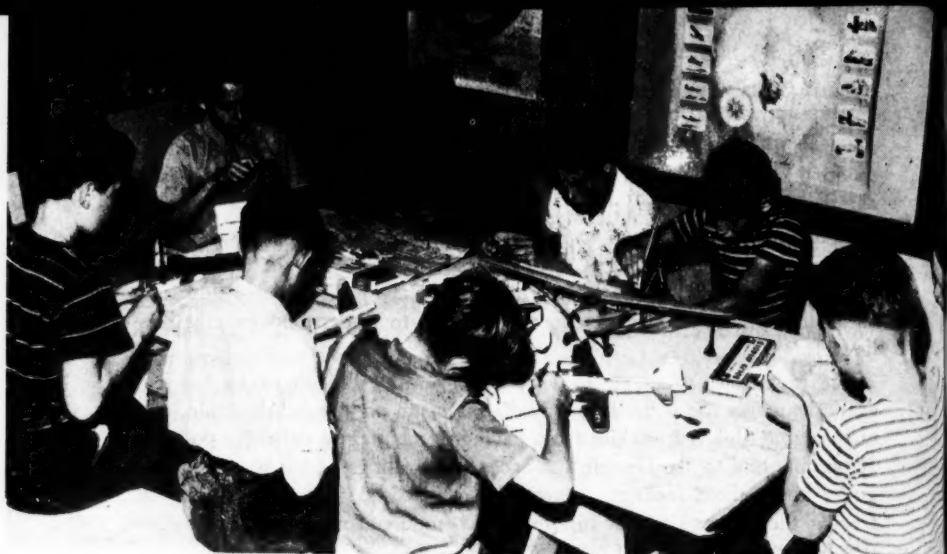
Above all, this attitude leads to identification with an honest, realistic way of facing each situation in its own terms; for that is exactly what we do when we recognize and accept the child's feelings. By contrast, identification with a rigid, authoritarian figure is poor preparation for meeting life problems flexibly.

It is likewise helpful to recognize the values and ideals of the children's group. A good deal of unnecessary misunderstanding and conflict can be eliminated by learning to see the effects of home and neighborhood training, particularly when these are different from the experience of the teacher. There is no point in condemning as "deliberate meanness" speech or behavior which is normal and common to the child's family.

Boys must be boys; and girls must prepare to be self-respecting, feminine women. This fact can be used positively in designing curriculums and in assigning appropriate tasks. To encourage a boy to identify entirely with a woman teacher would be active disservice. "Sissified" boys are poor prospects for emotionally healthy adulthood. Neither do we want to produce girls who are over-concerned with intellectualism (not at all the same as being intelligently alert), or who feel they ought to be men (though girls

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<sup>4</sup> See Chapter Eighteen, "Accepting and Clarifying the Child's Feelings."



*Denver, Colorado, Public Schools*

*Activities appropriate to the age-level of the group.*

may engage in the same pursuits as boys without denying their essential femininity).

Activities can also be designed to be appropriate to the age level of a given group. To have a roomful of "little old men and women" in the second grade—quiet, physically unmoving, emotionally restrained—is to impose a severe burden on the child; a burden that should be expected only of mature adults. If the children accept and identify with this premature outer restraint, one may predict a future crop of adults who may be outwardly conforming, but inwardly seething. Similarly, to force pre-adolescent boys to dance with girls may violate their code, their feelings, and the kind of social beings they see themselves to be. They will be in no mood to accept any teacher-directed activity. On the other hand, to ask for vigorous action and skilled handwork in constructing science equipment will often enlist their enthusiastic aid; and as they identify their interests with the teacher's, they may become more amenable in general to her suggestions.

Teachers can also do something for themselves. Teachers must know the goals and behaviors they have identified with, and the values they believe in. All of us are usually unaware of a surprisingly large part of our own motivations. "How much is my interest in teaching due to pleasure in seeing children develop their own abilities and ways of meeting life?" "How much is it the satisfaction of proving to myself that I can communicate subject-matter clearly?" Or even, "How much do I enjoy feeling, 'Here, at least, I can run things to suit myself, thank the Lord!'"

Teachers are probably not amiss in asking such questions about their own motives. If her motives are not "ideal" by her own standards, so much the better that the teacher knows it. Only then can she seek means of change.

It is probably almost as difficult—and yet as helpful—for the teacher to come to see where she has obtained her own sets of values. Most teachers come from a background different from that of many of the children. The simple recognition that teachers identify with a way of life that may have little meaning to a child from a different social level or a different religious or national group—is a step on the way toward better understanding and communication with children.

### What To Expect of the Child

In the last analysis, the "ideal" identification pattern for any school child can perhaps be stated quite simply:

1. To identify with the basic values of the American culture—honesty, responsibility, consideration for others, and so on—because he likes and identifies with people who act on these principles. Most of this is learned unconsciously, and only if his "models" practice what they preach.
2. To identify with the teacher in the areas that do not conflict with his necessary identifications with "models" of the same sex and same age level.
3. To identify with school values because they are relevant and important in the immediate present and in the foreseeable future. This does not occur unless the school promotes activities and goals which are genuinely realistic in terms of the child's life situation.

If this pattern of identification can be established, the child will have the deepest possible motivation to learn and a minimum of internal conflict in the process. If it is to be positive and successful, this requires teachers who are first of all sincere, friendly human beings, attractive as "models" for partial identification; and teachers who believe in what they are teaching because they see that it makes sense in terms of the realities of everyday life.

## CHAPTER TEN

# Participating in Shared Child-Adult Activities

CATHARINE CONRADI

**M**OTIVATION is a perennial concern of teachers. The more rigid the expectations of the teacher, the more she finds it necessary to "motivate" the child. Why?

Caroline Pratt for more than sixty years has been observing children's behavior from nursery school through adolescence. She finds that:

. . . the child, unhampered . . . is driven constantly by that little fire burning inside him, to do, to see, to learn. You will not find a child anywhere who will sit still and idle unless he is sick, *or in a traditional classroom.*

But she agrees with teachers that we have a problem, for she says:

All but a very few men and women in the world, a few unique beings touched with some kind of genius, have lost the urge to learn. . . . They lost it while they were still little children.<sup>1</sup>

The normal human being is active and has a basic tendency or striving to live. He is curious; he seeks food; he alternates exercise with rest, physical action with mental activity. He wants to be where there are other living beings. He is gregarious before he is social, for sociability is *learned* and involves interaction based upon learned methods of communication. The human organism is capable of profiting by its experiences and by the experiences of others; it is capable of learning to be sociable.

### Motivation a Primary Concern of Teachers

Yet something we are doing to children apparently is killing these native impulses—impulses we should be capitalizing upon. Perhaps we are hampering physiological processes by restricting the child's physical activity. Perhaps we

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from *I Learn from Children* by permission of Simon and Schuster, publishers. Copyright, 1948, by Caroline Pratt.



are hampering mental processes by restricting his impulses to talk and to talk about *his* discoveries. Perhaps we fail to provide adequate creative outlets, including ways of organizing and expressing ideas.

Whatever the reasons, the fact remains that teachers who say "How shall I motivate the child?" are trying to reawaken what appears to be dying. Such teachers may not be aware that the child is spontaneously motivated. They may not have inquired, "Toward *what* is this child motivated?" They appear to accept their task of meeting school objectives, without first asking whether or not the child can accept those objectives, or whether or not he understands them. They may not be clear as to what it is they are trying to build upon. Is it the child's natural drive to be in the presence of other people? His need to be liked by an adult (a parent substitute)? His need to feel competent? Or his social abilities to communicate and share with others—abilities which must be learned.

Perhaps the point can be illustrated from good nursery-school procedure. The nursery school, more often than the elementary or high school, seems to proceed upon sound principles of child development. The good nursery-school teacher wants the child to learn things which are within his ability and are important to the child himself. She builds upon the known characteristics of children with attention given to individual differences.

The good nursery-school teacher does not confuse the child's social contacts with sociability. She does not push for social play at an age when parallel play is the typical pattern (play which is independent, but which is carried on in the presence of other children). When a child pushes another child, she does not interpret this necessarily as hostility, but many times as evidence of the child's interest in exploring the essence of "other-childness." She encourages the child to use words which express his needs—words which are useful to him and at the same time help him to enjoy the sound of words. She does not encourage the child to climb before he is ready, or to sail down a slide before he can climb up a slide; or, in fact, to use the slide at all until he can establish the whole process, physically and mentally.

### **The Relation Between Social Participation and Motivation**

Motivation is closely related to social participation. We have already said that the child is gregarious. As he grows from infancy through childhood and adolescence, he develops not only a sense of self-ness and of self-differentiation but also more binding identifications with other persons. He wants to be with others; he wants to be like others; he wants to be liked by others; he wants to do what others do. He wants to participate in something that he and his group regard as important.





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*Sociability often enhances the quality of children's work.*

We may take it as a sound assumption that social participation is a strong source of motivation for any human being. Our problem becomes that of helping the individual to participate in group activities in such a way as to utilize this basic motivation in helping the child learn those things which society expects of him. Participation is often an end in itself, of course, and many children need help in developing skills of participation. But in the context of this chapter, we are primarily concerned with participation as a means to an end—helping the child learn by providing a context in which the child gains satisfaction from sharing in group activity.

For instance, let us look in on a classroom of first graders. There are thirty-two children in this room, doing seat work. Two boys are coloring circles in a traditional workbook. John says to Mark, "Did you do the orange one?"

"This one?" asks Mark.

"Good study habits!" comes the admonishing voice of the teacher from across the room.

The two boys are silent. In about a minute, Mark says, "Hand me that crayon . . . no, that one."

"The purple one, you mean," says John.

"What does 'good study habits' mean?" asks the teacher.

"Pay attention to your own work," the children chorus.

The boys subside again.

Examining this situation critically, who is right—the teacher or the boys? Actually, the boys, for at that age they naturally enjoy giving verbal expression to their actions. It can be recognized, as well, that they are in effect checking on each other's knowledge and are sharing ideas. Their major task and interest at this age is association with a neighbor. They learn through talking. Their minds were on a similar job, participating in an idea.

If the teacher could accept this need for participation at the level at which it was being evidenced, she would be furthering the learning process. Mark and John would, in all probability, learn more about colors and would develop better finger coordination if they were encouraged, rather than discouraged, in their sociability.

Growing sociability is not to be cut off at this first appearance. It often enhances the quality of childhood work.

Two youngsters, a boy and a girl, had developed the habit of painting, side by side, at easels. Their paintings were utterly different. One was going through a period of creating people with odd shaped faces; the other was intrigued with arrangements of furniture as a result of a recent visit to her father's furniture store.

Dick was absent one morning. His companion went over to paint as usual. She made several pictures which were unsatisfactory to her and which seemed to the adult to be uninspired. Finally she said, out loud, "Oh, I don't know—I guess I just don't like to paint without Dick."

The inspiration of sociability affected work, and this girl recognized it. She had made an important discovery. With greater maturity her motivation to paint would probably change. The idea to be expressed in paints might be more dominating than her need to paint in the company of another person. But at the moment she was right; she needed Dick.

### Participation Develops Gradually

Developmentally, the child proceeds through a series of stages—from liking to be in the presence of human beings, to experimenting with the qualities and reactions of human beings; from watching a person do something, to trying to do the same thing; from doing the same thing at the same time as another person, to understanding that people may have a common objective as they do the same thing; and from this, to the final

step of understanding that people may further a common objective by doing different things—i.e., by sharing effort and by specialization of effort.

The child ultimately comes to realize that a group objective can be satisfying to both the individual and the group. But he must always work at the level of his own ability and his own insight, whether he is under the guidance of the nursery-school teacher, the elementary-school teacher, or the high-school teacher.

The child watches, then does, and only then verbalizes. So far as the meaningfulness of an experience is concerned, the child's verbalizations grow from what he does, not from what he hears.

When a teacher works with very young children in a group, the "something" they are expected to do must be, at first, more or less essential from the standpoint of physical needs, such as eating a meal, running about outdoors, taking a nap, or avoiding physical hazards. She plans to promote the satisfaction of children by meeting their primary needs within the group situation. As young children learn to participate in group activities, and as they gain satisfaction from doing so, they are then prepared for the next step—learning to do something new because it is related to their satisfaction in participation.

Let us take the example of a group of pre-school children eating a meal together. They become competent in the mechanics of eating and they become "social" as well. If the experience is pleasant, pleasant memories are fostered. Children will gradually come together to make preparations in anticipation of the meal: they will go to the toilet, wash their hands, help set the table, and so on. Certain less interesting details will be undertaken with little emotional tension because they are submerged in the more pleasurable satisfactions of food and the company of other children.

At first the children settle around the table merely with the purpose of satisfying their hunger and of eating food which is pleasant to look at and to taste. As they learn to manage the eating process independently, they experience the satisfaction of having other children present and then the satisfaction of communicating with one another as they eat. They may talk about the food they are eating. "I like potato," says Billy. "I like potato," says Carl. "I yike 'tato," says Molly, merely making the same sounds as the other children, her attention still centered upon the process of eating.

Suppose that into this group of nursery youngsters comes Jane. She is four years old and possessed of the same basic urges as other children. She is hungry, but the group meal situation is new to her. Her hunger may overrule her doubts, and she may proceed to eat what is set before her, paying little attention to the group and gaining little satisfaction from the group association. Or the group may present a genuine threat to her self-confidence. She may be seated among the children who are very busy with their own conversations,

and whose sounds and activities are distracting. She forgets to eat; she may say she doesn't like her dinner. The alert teacher may decide to give her a little table with one other child of a quiet disposition. This affords her relief, and the meal proceeds with less strain for the newcomer.

Before long, Jane will welcome the signs and sounds of a meal, the talk of children; she will take her part in preparing for the meal, in carrying her own plate, in serving the milk, and in copying the activities of the others. Succeeding in these tasks as other children succeed will be a source of satisfaction, not because she is "competing" with other children (unless she is very insecure), but because she has learned the "nursery-school pattern."

Jane now knows approximately what is expected and can pay more attention to factors in the environment besides food. She becomes playful, satisfied with her success, and happy to be with other children. She accepts with equanimity the occasional mistakes of other boys and girls. As the interaction with other children becomes increasingly pleasant, it becomes a partial substitute of the urge to satisfy hunger, and she may even tolerate delays in eating.

Jane is now a part of the group; we may say she has learned to participate. But more than that, one may say she has learned certain other things—how to practice good health routines preparatory to eating, how to share responsibility in carrying out simple tasks; and she has learned these things *because* she has learned to participate.

### The Child Participates in Projects Which Are Meaningful to Him

A process similar to that described for nursery-school children operates with older children. A fourth-grade teacher will have little difficulty in getting children to participate in the preparation, serving, and eating of hot lunch at school. And she will have little difficulty in using the motivation which is engendered by participation in such a project to get her boys and girls to learn all the skills, attitudes, and interests such a project may arouse. They can learn science, arithmetic, reading; they can learn the skills of group planning and group action, ability to discuss and to make choices; they can learn about eating practices in other parts of the country, and about health conditions as related to those practices. They can become interested in their own health records, in growth patterns in height and weight, in comparing records of absence due to colds. They can become interested in activities which may include making a garden to provide against deficiencies of diet. They can learn table manners. The possibilities are limitless.

But the harassed teacher may say, "This is not what I mean. It is one thing to motivate children to learn things which are connected with their need to eat. But how can I motivate children to learn their arithmetic, for instance?"

The answer has already been implied. Arithmetic, science, reading—all can grow out of such a project as the group luncheon, where the project has succeeded largely because all the children participated in it. Take arithmetic skills, for example: What is the proportion of people absent to those present? The size of groups in proportion to cost of meals? Comparisons of cost of milk in half-pint containers to milk in quart containers? How much money will the state give us daily for serving a given number of meals? How much is our reimbursement per month? How much do we pay for help? How much per month do we pay for green vegetables, meat, milk, desserts?

Children will not need to be "motivated" to study arithmetic if arithmetic can be tied into their real life experience and their real preoccupations. They will not need to be "motivated" to study arithmetic if they can *participate* in a project which is real to them.

But a teacher may say, "You still do not understand what I mean. How can I get children to do things they just will *not* do?" The answer may perhaps be this: You must analyze what those things are. Do they require more sociability than the child is capable of? Or, if there is too little opportunity for sociability, do these things offer him the possibility of making new friends? How are they related to basic tendencies and past experiences?

If the teacher is trying to get the child to do something that cannot be related in some way with the child's natural tendencies or needs, or with the child's natural desire to feel he "belongs" to a group, then there is something fundamentally wrong. It is wrong to get him to do this thing *at this time*, no matter what its social or personal value may be for an adult, and no matter how important it may be for a child at some other age.

If a child has to be threatened with social disapproval or with exclusion from the group, and if he conforms to the teacher's demands through fear, he is likely to become a spineless creature who continuously will seek to "keep up with Joneses." We want human beings who understand the reasons behind social demands, who can make moral commitments, and who can carry them out.

Those persons responsible for school programs need to remember that schools have "thrown out" such people as Edison, people who are participating in the real ideas of the world and who may not be following a teacher who is bent upon teaching arithmetic in her own way, and *only* her own way.

How many times the writer has heard a child say, "I'm not really dumb, but I guess my teacher thinks I am!" When shall we get our texts, our activities, our curriculum to deal with matters which are interesting, important, and real to the learners? And when shall *we* begin "participating" in their lives as we expect them to participate in ours?

It is an all too common experience that an adult is able to discuss with grade-school children in rural areas such topics as what makes farm property valuable, the advantage of one type of corn over another, or the comparative values of different types of farm machinery; only then to hear the traditionally minded teacher complain that these same children just *will* not buckle down to "school work," so of course, "they cannot be promoted!" Actually such children should have been "promoted" long ago to an environment in which ideas are presented on their own level, where the tool subjects are shown to have value in relation to their real interests, where the teacher can participate in their lives, and where the child's participations are tied into the learning situation.

Perhaps we should restate our thesis again: that the child will be quick to participate in projects which are meaningful to him and the satisfaction obtained from such participation becomes an added reinforcement in his motivation to learn those things we want him to learn.

### The Child Must Participate in His Own Way

"Take one of *my* problems," says another teacher. "I am teaching social studies in junior high school. I have one boy, Charles, who spends his life with maps. He measures, computes, reads maps and charts, and would do

*Can the teacher relate history to Charles' interest in maps?*

*Fort Smith, Arkansas, Public Schools*





this interminably; but when it comes to the historical aspects of our study, he just isn't there."

Can this teacher apply the principles we have been discussing? A map represents a "story" or facts discovered by someone at some time; those facts are part of history. Can Charles make maps to represent historical data which he must first discover and learn? And can Charles take charge of a group or share with others in this undertaking? In other words, can this teacher relate history to Charles' interest in maps, and to Charles' interest in group participation? Can she, for instance, place Charles in a history group where his map-drawing ability gives him status with his fellows? Where he can enjoy participating? And can she then build upon this double motivation, his spontaneous interest *plus* his feeling of belongingness?

Another teacher says: "Now my problem is different. I am supposed to be teaching art. The children I teach are in first and second grade, but every year I have children who just won't touch finger paints, or chalks, or clay. They sit and look on. They say, 'I can't,' or 'It's messy.'"

Here, of course, is an activity closely related to basic urges to explore and to manipulate. Clay and finger paints are fine media of expression; there are no "tools" to intervene between artist and medium; there is the possibility of working with both hands symmetrically, of getting the genuine "feel" of materials. But, for some children, cleanliness has been set above all other values, and adult approval has been the coveted award for abstaining from soiling the hands.

In such cases, the wise teacher will come to the assistance of the child. She will allow him to get "further away" from finger paints if she allows him to cook the starch, to add dry color, and to test for the desired consistency and tone. These activities are carried on as part of the group activity. At the moment the teacher encourages him to "participate," but only so far as he can go in the light of his early conditioning. To urge him to do more would be to arouse a deep sense of guilt in the child.

The chances are that in due time the "cook" will one day be experimenting with the medium. But the point is that the teacher helps the child to belong to the group in whatever way he can. She does not encourage him to withdraw altogether from the group undertaking—to read a book while the others are working with finger paints. And in time the child is likely to get his fingers into the paints because he feels accepted by the other children, and because he wants to do what they do.

The music teacher may think she has a special problem. Here are children who are convinced they cannot sing, and perhaps they cannot sing in the way older people can. Does it matter whether they *sing* as an initial



musical experience? Perhaps some can dance; others can experiment with a tonette, a harmonica, a rhythm drum; and others can make musical instruments such as tuned water glasses, drums, reed pipes. It should be the quality of the music which allures, as Mursell shows us.<sup>2</sup> The child is "participating" in the intention of the composer if he can *feel* the music, if he can choose music for different moods, if he can recognize the "curve" of melodic form, or if he can express rhythmic patterns made on the drum or in dances of his own creating.<sup>3</sup> And the child can participate with other children in the enjoyment of music, once the range of musical activities is broadened. If the child can participate in his own way, the participation will further his interests in music.

Occasionally one finds a child with real intellectual skills and abilities who cannot perform in other activities in the presence of other children. If the teacher takes the time to analyze the factors in the situation and to talk to the child, or more important, to let the child talk, the realities of the child's problem often become apparent.

Some four-year-olds were preparing simple trimmings for a Christmas tree. They spent approximately one-half hour on each of several days on this project. It was noted that one cheerful little boy, intensely verbal and the child of highly intelligent parents, would roam away when handwork was offered. When the other children were stringing sections of cellophane "straws" and squares of paper on colored yarn, he would devise a game for himself, going off and sitting inside a large toy truck in one corner of the room.

On the second day, the teacher casually took a small box of materials over to the truck and said to the child, "Here's yours." He took it, and when left alone began to experiment with stringing the lengths of colored cellophane. Observing him from a distance, the teacher noted that his hands were unsteady and he evidently had more difficulty in accomplishing this task than others of his age.

But the next day, he elected to work at a little table by himself; he was coming "out of hiding" by degrees. By the fourth day, he was working along with the others.

In this child's case, participation was achieved through participating in the "idea," then in developing skill, and subsequently in joining with other children in a group. Once participation was established, the child enjoyed cutting and pasting and was willing to practice these skills whenever the group was so engaged.

Very often it is the older child who, well aware of group activity, evaluates his own skills and decides he cannot achieve whatever it is the

<sup>2</sup> Mursell, James L. *Education for Musical Growth*. New York: Ginn and Company, 1948.

<sup>3</sup> Cole, Natalie Robinson. *The Arts in the Classroom*. New York: The John Day Co., 1940.

group is engaged in. Encouraging him into the group may not be the answer. He may have gone so far as to rationalize, because of his feeling of incompetence, that the children do not want him. Only the use of some competence in a group undertaking will be motivating. Ideally it should be competence in the area in which the child has felt his short-coming; but if this is not possible the child must be helped to develop feelings of belongingness by understanding that people are different, that some have special skills in one area and others in another.

The child's satisfaction with his accomplishments and his appreciation of the skills of others are usually much more apparent in those schools where the atmosphere is non-striving and non-competitive, where children are accepted for what they are, and where they are helped to participate in whatever ways they can.

### Teacher-Pupil Planning

As children grow older, their activities in school partake more and more of "shared ideas." The particular ideas dealt with depend, of course, upon the curriculum of the particular school. All sound curriculum planners today recognize that we need to build upon knowledge of what the particular children we are dealing with are like, what they have experienced, and the ways of making known their understandings and misunderstandings they have developed.

To obtain this knowledge of children, the teacher must provide, in the early stages of her association with a group of children, time for them to formulate their plans, divide their work, comment upon their satisfaction or failure, and plan again. She will allow the achievement to stand for itself as the "reward." The children will know when they have succeeded; they will not need the teacher's grades to tell them. They will probably outline ways in which individual children can improve their contributions. When the teacher can limit her evaluation functions to catching the best spirit of the group, helping children express their feelings of achievement, and helping them replan and improve, she is probably a fine teacher and a genuine guide. She will have helped children to participate, in a very real sense, in the functions of the school.

Student-teacher and student-student planning, depending in part upon child maturity and purposes, is an expression of the quality of human living the teacher is able to demonstrate and the children able to assimilate.<sup>4</sup> Any adult who really lives democratically will want to find out what ideas her

<sup>4</sup> Teacher-pupil planning enters into practically every recent book on curriculum. There are good illustrations in Stratemeyer, F. B.; Forkner, H. L.; and McKim, M. G. *Developing a Curriculum for Modern Living*. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1947.

group has; how much they are capable of achieving; and how little, not how much, guidance she has to exert. If she has to be concerned with pouring facts into minds, she is less able to promote the successful, integrated personality which is essential for the effectual functioning of our society. The objective in a democracy may properly be to utilize and develop capacities within the group in such a way and through such experiences that no one is left out, and in such a way that pressures are reduced to a minimum.

### Summary

The child who *lives* is participating in the progress of the world. Man is a "time-binding" creature who can, in a sense, begin where the previous generation left off. He is always born into a "new" society, for the environment in which he functions differs from previous environments by reason of new ideas, new materials, and new groupings of people. If the child uses materials or works with ideas in any way at all, he is participating in the world.

Techniques of social participation are learned, just as other skills are learned. To practice these skills for common goals, they must be learned to the point of providing the individual with satisfaction. When participation provides satisfaction, the individual tends to have his motivation reinforced and to undertake further learning. Participation, therefore, may be both an end and a means to an end. As the latter, it may be utilized in creating a learning situation which will be inherently motivating to the child.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

# Shall We Use Rewards and Punishments?

THE preceding chapters in Part Two have dealt with various kinds of motivation: the child's spontaneous interests, his desire for participation, and his drive to identify with others. Let us now reconsider the problem of motivation in light of the preceding discussions, and in reference to the role of reward and punishment.

### What Do We Mean by Motivation?

Motivation is a general term that refers to whatever makes an individual do what he does. Essentially this is some "inner force," but it is more than that. Motivation is not only determined by all the physical and emotional needs of the individual at a given time and by his wishes, his ideals, and his aspirations, but also by the things going on in the world around him as he perceives them, as he interprets them in terms of what he feels and what he has learned. What a child does is a blend of all these forces.

If, for example, a child likes the teacher, what he wants to do and what he does do will differ from what he would do if he disliked her.

If a boy has a burning desire to play baseball and doesn't care about the lesson in arithmetic, he may cut corners, do problems hastily, copy from others, and do only what he has to do to get out of the room. But if his girl friend is the best student in the class, he may study like a demon to win her approval.

Or, if a boy is interested in designing and building model airplanes, he may see the importance of arithmetic in his long-range goals.

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\* The relationship of rewards and punishments to motivations and their influences on learning is a controversial area. Consequently, several people have contributed to the discussion of this topic, and their viewpoints are incorporated in this chapter. Among the contributors are W. H. Beatty, E. A. Haggard, R. J. Havighurst, B. Neugarten, and C. Tryon.

Here we have four motivations, all different, and each of them resulting in a different kind of learning.

If each of these examples singles out only one major cause of behavior, it is only for the sake of clarity. Actually, motivations are complex and often in conflict. Elaborating the above examples, a child may work hard in the arithmetic class because he sees the usefulness of the subject and also because it gains him approval from his girl friend, from the teacher, and from his parents. Or, he may do very spotty work because he is torn between the desire to get out and play baseball and the desire to win approval from his girl friend. Sometimes the baseball will win out, and sometimes the arithmetic.

### Motivation Is Within the Individual

The system of rewards and punishments so commonly relied upon by our society and by our schools is based upon the assumption that motivation is external to the individual. For example, if the mother holds up a piece of candy, the three-year-old will supposedly do what he is asked to do in order to get the candy. In the classroom we do this same thing when we use "gold stars" or grades or honor rolls. Or again, if we threaten to "spank" the child in one way or another—actually spanking him, isolating him from the group, scolding him, or sending him to the principal's office—we assume that he will obey. In both these cases, it is something outside

*The classroom is a wonderful place for some children.*



San Diego, California, City Schools

the individual—the candy, the gold star, or the “spanking”—which supposedly motivates the desired actions.

When we look more closely at these situations we begin to notice a fundamental fallacy. Not all children will do things for candy; the child who is angry at the giver may ignore or reject the candy. Not all children accept the idea of working for stars or grades. For instance, a teacher was a little surprised recently when she handed a spelling test back to a boy with an F on it and heard him say, “I know how to spell all those words.” “Then why didn’t you, Bill?” the teacher asked. He replied, “Aw, nertz, I just don’t care. I just put down the first thing that comes into my head. So what?”

What then is wrong with the assumption that motivation is an external thing? In the cases mentioned, what kept the child from responding to the external motivation? In the one case, it was anger; in the other, it was a strong disinterest. Each is an internal motive within the child.

Does this mean, then, that motivation is sometimes an internal stimulus and sometimes an external one? Let us look at the same cases to see if motivation is ever really external.

When the child does as he is asked to do in order to get a gold star, it must mean that he has an internal desire for the gold star—that the star has taken on a meaning and significance to the child, and that he is willing to accept it as a symbol of the reward for which he is striving, whether that reward be teacher approval, family approval, age-mate approval or something else. Whether or not a gold star or a “spanking” will have meaning and will be a sufficient inducement to the child, will depend upon the internal desire, need, or goal of the child. Thus it seems that motivation is always something within the child which controls his actions in different situations.

#### **Motivation Depends on an Individual's Perception of the Situation**

The nature of the external situation and what it means to the individual is, as has already been implied, an important determiner of his behavior. The more important the situation, the greater difference it makes in the person's behavior. For instance:

We have all seen school teachers who enjoy teaching when the atmosphere of the classroom is warm, friendly, and spontaneous. However, when these same teachers learn that the school superintendent is going to visit the class (or even more, is already in their classroom), they seem to tighten up; they want the children to be orderly, obedient, and well mannered.

In short, when the superintendent is visiting, everyone must be on his best behavior. This is not surprising, since the superintendent's



approval means a great deal to the teacher concerned. For this reason, his presence in the room makes all the difference in the world as to how she behaves, even though her underlying motivation to be a good teacher has not changed in the least. What has changed is the teacher's perception of this external situation. It is no longer a teaching situation with thirty children; it is now a demonstration of her proficiency for the superintendent. Regardless of whether or not the superintendent would disapprove of a spontaneous atmosphere in the classroom, the position he holds over her makes her think not only of teaching but also of her position and her livelihood. Perceiving this possible threat to her position, she may tighten up and feel anxious. Some teachers, on the other hand, might not perceive the situation this way at all. They would feel just as free no matter who was observing them.

In the same way children perceive a situation in terms of its meaning for them. A classroom is a fearful place to some children. When the child wants to be active, he has to sit still. When he wants to share some new idea with another child, he is told to be quiet and not whisper in class. When he would like to be out playing baseball, he has to study grammar. Or the classroom may be a wonderful place to other children, a place where they enjoy themselves and do many interesting things.

When a child first comes to school, the classroom has neither of these meanings. Gradually, however, what was originally a big room with chairs and tables, toys, paints, a strange adult, and many strange children becomes a place where one can have fun. The teacher is warm and understanding and friendly. With a perception like this the child is glad to go to school and gets ready before his mother tells him it is time. On the other hand, if his perception of school and the teacher is negative, the child may shy away from school, may even become ill and not be able to go.

Thus motivation is not just something that operates within the child beforehand to control his actions. More than this, motivation is always related to his perception or interpretation of the classroom situation.<sup>1</sup>

#### Perceptions Differ for Different Individuals

The importance of another factor in motivation now becomes apparent. In the earlier examples it was stated that many children would act in a certain way, thus implying that some would not. In this last example, it was stated that some children would perceive the classroom as a fearsome place, while others would see it as a joyful place. Both of these statements indicate that there are individual differences in behavior, and that many of these differences are tied up with past learning.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kelley, Earl. *Education for What Is Real*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947.

<sup>2</sup> Dewey, John. *Experience and Education*. New York: Macmillan Co. 1938.



It is quite obvious that no two children have exactly the same experiences in growing up. Even twins who are constantly together and who seem to share all their experiences have actually seen and felt many things differently. By the time any child enters school, it is safe to say that he has a unique background of past experience and is perceiving all situations at least a little differently from everyone else.

There are, of course, other differences too, such as differences in physique and in ability to coordinate. But even if all children started out exactly the same in all these factors, the differences in their experiences by the time they reach school would make it difficult to believe that they ever had been the same. Two children starting in autumn in the same class might have come from quite different classes the year before. One child might have been in a room where the teacher allowed much free movement and talking, whereas the other child might have had a very strict teacher, where children could not leave their seats or talk without permission. If the new teacher is very strict then the second child has an advantage over the first. The first child may appear to be a problem child until he learns about the new teacher.

This example shows an obvious difference in perception, but many differences are more subtle. One child may believe that it is all right to state your own opinion regardless of what others think, whereas another child believes one should always go along with the majority. There will, of course, be differences in the way the two children behave, even though the reasons may not be obvious. The first child may appear to be a nuisance, and the second, a model child.<sup>3</sup>

### Shortcomings in the Use of Rewards and Punishments

In considering the use of rewards and punishments, it may be well to summarize and define motivation again. Motivation is essentially a state *within* the individual which determines his behavior and is a consequence of his physical needs, his feelings, his perceptions and evaluations of the situation in which he finds himself, and his past experiences in such situations. Motivation is the focus of all internal and external forces playing upon an individual at any one time.

The motivations which are relatively intrinsic are those already discussed in the chapters immediately preceding—namely, the child's spontaneous interests, his identifications with other people around him, and his need to participate as a member of the group. It is the thesis of this book that constructive school practices will utilize these three types of motivation.

<sup>3</sup> American Council on Education. *Helping Teachers Understand Children*. Washington, D. C.: the Council, 1945.

Seen in this light, the commonly used systems of rewards and punishments are far removed from these intrinsic motivations. The types of rewards and punishments used in so many of our schools are extrinsic to the child's real motives. Perhaps we might think of motivation as a kind of continuum. At one end, the "intrinsic" pole representing the child's spontaneous interests; at the other end, the "extrinsic" pole representing the grades, gold stars, and honor rolls. Intermediate between the two extremes would fall the child's drives toward identification and participation.

This is not to say that every system of reward or punishment must be extrinsic. We have already indicated that any reward, if it is to be a reward, is, by definition, intrinsic. The first great shortcoming in the typical reward-and-punishment system is that it fails to be motivating to so many children; it is ineffective because it remains extrinsic. The reward or punishment fails because it is meaningless to the child. To Bill, who received an F on his spelling paper, grades have no significance. To attempt to "motivate" him by F's or C's or A's is to waste the teacher's efforts. To put it another way, then, the typical rewards and punishments fail to achieve the desired goal because they are unrelated to the child's interests, feelings, and perceptions.

Let us take another example. It is common practice to isolate a child if he does not conform to the group. Often the purpose of isolating the child is to get the child out of the teacher's way as much as it is to teach the child how to behave. It may accomplish the former, but it will probably be quite ineffective for the latter purpose.

In a kindergarten class the boys were all sitting on a rug at one end of the room while the girls were dancing to some music. The boys' turn would come up in a minute. Peter was a little bored by the whole procedure, and turned to John and began to wrestle. The teacher, ever on the watch, immediately walked over and pulled them apart. She put Peter in one corner and John in another, and said, "You'll stay there now until you have learned how to behave in class."

If this is happening to Peter for the first time in school, it may mean that he doesn't know that wrestling is forbidden, or it may mean that he had wrestled before and has not been punished for it. But if this has often happened to Peter before, then it is likely that isolation is not an effective punishment.

One thing is certain: Peter is not going to learn how to behave in a group while he is sitting in a corner by himself. He may learn the things he is not supposed to do; but learning must also be positive. One learns how to behave in a group by behaving in a group.

Peter's case is an illustration, also, of the second great shortcoming of our usual systems of rewards and punishments, that in addition to being ineffective, they often result in wrong or undesirable learnings. What

is Peter learning as a result of being isolated from the group? He may be learning "If you do what you want to do, you get punished. If you do what the teacher wants you to do, you have no fun. You lose either way." Or is he learning that "To sit by myself is just as desirable as to sit with the others"?

Or is he learning that he must be docile and submissive if he is to succeed at school? Do we want to produce retiring, conforming, submissive individuals, or do we want to produce individuals who act independently and with maturity in the large variety of situations which will face them as adults? In a democracy there is only one possible answer: we want our children to become responsible, autonomous adults who can think for themselves and who will take an active part in running and improving their community. Are the types of rewards and punishments which have been discussed, and which are probably the ones most commonly used in our schools, likely to achieve this objective?

One of the authors was acquainted with a girl who started her formal education in a school where the greatest emphasis was placed on the meaningfulness of the material learned. The children learned the material because they became interested in it; they found it exciting for its own sake. Then Marilyn moved to another city and she found her new school strict, rigid, and authoritarian. She wasn't used to this type of school, and for a while she didn't do very well on the weekly tests. But she was bright and soon learned to study—in order to get good grades on the tests. She got them. She got A's almost every week on her exams. Her new teacher, who initially had looked at her as though she were some sort of an ugly duckling, now thought of her as a fine student.

Her father, however, commented on the fact that his daughter had changed in her attitude toward school. Marilyn had become ruthless and competitive. To win the approval of her teachers and to gain academic status in her group, she wanted only to get good grades. She had stopped reading outside books; she was interested only in A's.

Can this girl be blamed for wanting to be accepted, for wanting to be liked by her teachers, for wanting the respect of her fellow students, for wanting to fit into the scheme of things? Yet what can be said about the effect of her changed motivation? Would we not all agree that a less desirable learning has occurred?

As teachers, we must constantly ask ourselves, "What by-products, what unintentional learnings, result from the methods we are using?" Marilyn learned to be competitive; another child may learn to hate arithmetic; another child may learn to feel inferior to others. Such "by-products" often become the enduring "end-products" of education; certainly they have tremendous influence upon the mental health of the child.

### How Shall We Use Rewards and Punishments?

If commonly used rewards and punishments are unrelated to the child's real motivations, and if they result in undesirable types of learning, are we to discontinue all rewards and punishments?

Obviously, it would be impossible to do so. The child will feel himself rewarded or punished by a large variety of situations, and by a large variety of attitudes toward him. We may reward a child by showing him that he is a likable person, just as we may *try* to reward him by giving him an A. The question becomes, "What types of rewards and punishments should we utilize? How can we further the intrinsic motivations? How can we make optimum use of the child's spontaneous interests, his needs for participation, and his needs for identification?"

Let us consider the teaching of reading. The reason for teaching this skill is that it serves many helpful purposes for the individual, both when he is a child and when he is an adult. Ideally, reading should be learned as a means of finding enjoyment, of getting answers to problems, of sharing experiences with other people, and of keeping abreast with what is going on in the world. While he is learning to read, the child's reading experiences should be enjoyable; they should help him solve his problems; they should help him gain new experiences; and finally, they should help him to keep abreast of the times. If reading could be taught in this way, we would be succeeding in utilizing the child's spontaneous interests; we would be capitalizing upon the most intrinsic motivation of all.

Yet, actually, learning to read can further the child's own interests only when he is beyond the stage of early childhood. The first grader does not read to find answers to questions, or to share experiences with others.

Why do young children learn to read, in actual practice? In the early grades, most boys and girls learn to read because they want to be like the adults they admire; they want to be like mother or father or teacher. They want the approval of these adults. They also learn to read because their group is engaged in learning to read, and they want to do what others are doing. These motivations are those of identification and participation.

If the teacher at the first- or second-grade level can devise a system of rewards which reinforce the child's drives for identification and participation, she will have done much to further the learning process. If, in succeeding grade levels, she can help the child to further his spontaneous interests by learning to read, she will, again, have done much to further the learning process.



*National Education Association*

*Reading helps us discover many new and interesting things.*

This means, in practice, that the first grader is told, though indirectly, "As you learn to read, you will be more like your mother or father or teacher." And this means that the reading situation will be set up in such a way that each child participates in the group undertaking, and that he finds such participation gratifying. These techniques are very different from that of saying to the child, "If you learn to read, you will get a good grade, or you will become the class monitor."

And the fourth grader will be taught to read by presenting him with reading materials which are interesting to *him*. As has been pointed out before, many a child has learned to read by reading comic books. The implication may also be, that if we wish to teach children to read as a means of furthering their spontaneous interests, we may have to postpone the teaching of reading altogether for a few years.

Our task becomes, then, that of selecting rewards and punishments which are less extrinsic, and more intrinsic. We must select rewards and punishments which are in keeping with, and which will reinforce, the child's intrinsic motivations, those which, in the long run, will result in better learning and in better mental health.

# Knowing and Learning to Know

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this book is to provide a comprehensive survey of the history and philosophy of knowledge. It is intended for students of philosophy, history, and the social sciences. The book is divided into two main parts: the first part deals with the history of knowledge, and the second part deals with the philosophy of knowledge. The first part is divided into three sections: the first section deals with the history of knowledge in the ancient world, the second section deals with the history of knowledge in the medieval world, and the third section deals with the history of knowledge in the modern world. The second part is divided into two sections: the first section deals with the philosophy of knowledge in the ancient world, and the second section deals with the philosophy of knowledge in the modern world. The book is written in a clear and concise style, and it is intended to be a useful resource for students and scholars alike.







## PART THREE

# Knowing and Helping the Child

### INTRODUCTION

THIS part of the yearbook assumes that school personnel feel genuinely responsible for the "whole child"—responsible for the "feeling" and "doing" aspects of his living as well as for the "thinking" aspect. The school must, then, be in a position to promote the child's emotional and social development, and to evaluate his progress in such development. This means that skills in methodology must be acquired, not just by a specialist or two added to the school staff, but by supervisors, administrators, and teachers, particularly by teachers who are in direct and daily contact with the children whose mental health is at stake.

A teacher could have a thorough knowledge of the scientific facts and principles considered in Part I of this volume and still, when confronted with a real child, be helpless to diagnose or help the child with his problems of growing up. It is necessary, therefore, to obtain valid information about a child before we can apply scientific generalizations or principles to his behavior; and in order to obtain such information, we must have the *techniques* for obtaining it.

Experienced teachers usually know much more about children at the developmental level at which they teach than the layman, but there are hazards in the attitude that "I have been teaching twenty years and there isn't much I don't know about children."

Let us use an analogy. A number of people pass down the street of a neighborhood shopping district each day. Each person perceives that street in different ways. A man on his way to work pauses in front of the window where cameras are displayed and studies it carefully; he looks at his watch and moves along. He ducks into a tobacco shop at the corner, picks up a favorite tobacco and a paper and, walking farther, pauses before a photographic display in another window. He is vaguely aware that both photog-

raphy shops carry other "lines," but which shop carries what other goods he would not be sure. He also knows that there are some grocery stores and a post office near the bank, but any map he drew of the street would be inaccurate. The lingerie shop next door to the first camera shop is a pink blur for him, and the successive dress and hat shops are blank windows.

His wife, coming along a few minutes later for the morning shopping, studies the windows of the lingerie, dress, and hat shops. Then she hurries across the street to the second grocery store, to be one of the first to examine the newly displayed fresh vegetables, making a mental note to go back to another store to compare prices. Crossing to the bakery and the meat market, she pauses at the second "camera" store to study a set of dishes in the window. But, squelching a vision of unmatched everyday chinaware at home, she goes on to the dime store to get shoe laces for her nine-year-old Jimmy. She had noticed the night before as she stumbled over his shoes in the bathroom that the laces were torn and knotted in several places.

Jimmy on his way to school is, as usual, the first member of his family to be on the street. He is watching a coal truck back up to a coal chute. His hands and the knees and seat of his blue jeans attest to the fact that he has already been up and down the coal chute. A few minutes later he is lying on his stomach, head out of sight, gazing into the mysteries of an open manhole, until a "man at work" below shoos him away. He darts into the dime store to the counter of Hallowe'en masks and checks the remaining number of the highly preferred lion's-face variety. Will the supply last until his allowance tomorrow? He pauses briefly at the bakery and confectionery store, but his breakfast is too much with him. (Coming home to lunch he will give these windows a more thorough survey.) He pops into the tobacco shop to squat on the floor and skim through the array of comic books. He is literally unaware that this store carries morning papers and pipe tobacco.

Just as each person "sees" the street differently and is aware of certain features and unaware of others, so, in similar fashion, do we perceive other *persons* in terms of our own preoccupations, needs, and purposes. Cumulative records in schools over the country attest to this fact. If we were to study carefully the evaluations made by, say, ten teachers about thirty different children, with all identifying data removed, it would be much easier to group the records made by each *teacher* than it would to group the records about each *child*. In other words, the summary statements which so many teachers are expected to make each year about their children tell much more about each teacher—her preoccupations, needs, and purposes—than they do about each child! We have then the task of learning to obtain *valid* information, uncolored by the teacher's own private world, about each child and about the group.

A number of techniques have emerged from the field of research and clinical practice which are directly useful in the classroom in knowing or understanding the child or a group of children and which offer ways of minimizing unique personal biases. A selection of such techniques is presented in Part III: "observation and anecdote writing" (Chapter Twelve), "sociometric tests" (Chapter Thirteen), "informal interviews" (Chapter Fourteen), "analysis of creative products" (Chapter Fifteen), "sociodrama" (Chapter Sixteen), "understanding of group dynamics" (Chapter Seventeen), and "reflection of feeling" (Chapter Eighteen).

In addition to describing these techniques, all these chapters (with the exception of Chapter Twelve on observation) are designed to give some tentative answers to the teachers who so often say, "Tell me what to do." Naturally, these chapters cannot give specific answers on how to deal with a given child or group of children, largely because a child's or a group's behavior in one sense is a symptom, just as a high fever is a symptom. Any symptom must be seen in context; and the underlying situation, not the symptom itself, must be dealt with. But these chapters do give some guidelines on ways of dealing with children in order to promote mental health.

The reader should be warned that *reading about these techniques does not amount to skill in these techniques*. All of them require practice to develop real skill and understanding in using them, and for the most part, this learning should be supervised by an instructor or consultant who is an expert in the technique.

Yet this part of the book is intended to serve at least two purposes: First, we hope that it will help teachers acquire a nodding acquaintance with some of the most promising methods of studying and helping children, and will encourage teachers to go further and become proficient in the use of these techniques. Our second purpose arises from the fact that teacher-training institutions, while they offer preparation in the techniques of teaching *subjectmatter*, do not, for the most part, offer preparation in the techniques of teaching *children*. It is our hope that such institutions will modify their curriculum in order to take account of this area of teacher-training, an area that takes on crucial importance if we are to help teachers foster the mental health of children.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

# Using Anecdotal Records To Know the Child

HELEN BIEKER

A CLASSROOM teacher is often asked to approach her work in terms of aiding all phases of development of the children in her group. How is she to know all she would like to know about each child? And how is she to use this information once she has it? Teachers can and do accumulate informations and develop techniques for knowing children. In some ways their knowledge excels the knowledge of those who gain their acquaintance with children under controlled research situations. Teachers see children in varied, natural, and informal circumstances; they observe many kinds of relationships among children. They see children play many different roles with many different persons in many different situations. Yet teachers have not widely recognized the value of the information which is theirs, or could be theirs. We have in many ways left to experts the work of understanding human beings. The reliance on experts may exclude learning to think things out for ourselves in terms of the information we have at hand, or the information we can assemble ourselves about the boys and girls we teach.

One way of studying a child is to record and analyze descriptions of situations in which the child is involved. This is the method of the anecdotal record. As a tool the anecdotal record has many uses and forms. It has been used successfully by many busy teachers for a variety of purposes. As a device for understanding an individual child, it has special pertinence and usefulness.

The anecdotal record is here understood to be a written record kept by a teacher of samples of a child's behavior in varying situations. The ongoing record becomes a study tool. Entries made two or three times a week during a year, or a longer entry made once a week, may give a workable

picture of a child. The teacher is free to write in her own terms and at her own convenience.

As the record grows, study of the record may reveal a need for more information to understand the child's behavior. One may then go to other resources for help. School records, comments of other teachers or of anyone who has had acquaintance with the child, comments of friends, parents' viewpoints, and the child's own remarks, all enrich the value of the record. The teacher does not probe or make a formal investigation; the information is usually there to be used and may be accumulated casually and naturally as one's eyes and ears become sharpened.

The anecdotal record is not meant to be a case study, a social case record, a clinical record. It is meant to be a study device for improving professional insights. It is a collection of views of a child over a school year, so gathered as to represent a sequential picture of his many kinds of behavior. It is meant to be a practical device for a busy teacher; it should not require extra exertion or interfere with her regular teaching role.

### What Makes a Good Anecdotal Record?

In a school year a record may range from three to forty pages. A record may start sparse, self-conscious, highly personal. In time it should become a rather free-flowing, selective, many-sided collection of vivid and detailed informations about a child. It may be a brief record, and yet contain information that will provide many insights. It is important that the teacher feel free to give a picture of a child as he appears to her. This facilitates her recording, and it helps to bring out quickly the relationship between her and the child.

A criterion for recording skill is the extent to which the teacher lets the child tell his own story. A good record is one which includes specific details, a wide selection of behavioral incidents, actual conversations, samples of written or other creative expression, descriptions of behavior in formal and informal situations, behavior with friends and relatives, and behavior in and out of the classroom. A good anecdotal recording is specific, factual, descriptive of what was actually seen to occur, devoid as much as possible of subjective terms. The recorder should indicate time of day, persons involved, central focus of the incident, beginning, middle, and end. The data so introduced give more meaning when later interpreted for the bearing they have on one or more phases of the child's development.

The question may well be raised: How can an amateur observer collect pictures of a child which will be objective? It is true that the anecdotal record, like many other records and research data on children, contains



*War Department, Springfield Armory*

*Teachers observe children in natural, informal situations.*

many subjective elements. It may at times reveal as much of the teacher as it does of the child. One of the aims in using the record is to let the teacher see for herself what her own biases are. By putting in writing what she has seen and heard, she may later study the accuracy and balance of her observation.

### **First Steps in Recording**

How does one go about making an anecdotal record? Since one cannot study all the children in a classroom at once, the teacher first selects a child who can readily be observed. She chooses a child who is rather typical of the group, or one who appeals to her as an interesting child to observe. It is wise, for a first endeavor, to choose a child who is not entangled in problems of adjustment which may prove too difficult for a teacher to analyze.

It is well to state frankly one's reasons for choosing a particular child to study. Jerry's teacher chose him, she says, because:

He seems at ease with adults and his peers. Yet he isn't as popular in the homeroom as I think he could or ought to be. He doesn't "lead" in any way. He wants to "efface" himself in almost every situation, yet he seems to be as successful as he wants to be with the children.

That is how Jerry looks to her, and it is important to say it.

Recording is private, and the child's name is disguised. The child himself, other children, parents, other teachers, anyone other than the teacher herself are not to know that the child is under special observation. If the teacher is working in a study group of persons also learning to record and

interpret behavior, professional secrecy is essential and should be assured beforehand.

Entries may have to be made when children are not present. One may be helped by briefly jotting down who was involved in the incident, the main events, and the sequence of events. The write-up of the anecdote may then be made at a more leisurely moment. One's memory improves surprisingly with practice.

Since all behavior is meaningful, any situation will do for a first recording of how a child looks to a teacher. For example, Jackie's teacher, after indicating that Jackie was an eleven-year-old in the fifth grade, and after writing a generalized description of his appearance and the impression he makes upon her, writes this:

*September 22*

Jackie has a fresh shirt this morning. While the others are doing dictionary work he is trying to talk to Hervey in sign language—makes "catching" motion, sees me watching him, looks at his book. Makes motion as if rolling something on his desk.

"Jackie, have you finished your dictionary work?"

"No'm, I'm just fixin' to git it."

He got up and whispered to Bob, who sits in front of him. Bob handed Jackie a long red pencil.

At recess Jackie wrote his misspelled words quickly and was out ready to play softball, yelling "Play ball!" as he rushed out of the building.

The teacher has caught in this first entry something of Jackie's style of movement, his keen interest in baseball, his manner of relating to friends and to the teacher, his disposal of schoolwork in competition with outside interests, his rush of energy and freedom of direction.

### **The Record Grows**

Entries after the first one vary with differences in the recorder and in the child. Recording may be a little like charcoal sketching. One person communicates through a few suggestive lines and scrolls; another blocks in a solid portrait. Whatever the variation from one observer to another, the important thing to watch for is that the child himself comes through with as little distortion as possible.

As the record grows, the teacher studies the incidents for what meanings they contain. She may wish to make note of her ideas and hunches so that she can test them by seeking further evidence. She may have to look at the child in a greater variety of situations. Having thought through a number of possible reasons for his behavior, she may record incidents in



terms of her new needs for wider inclusion of facts, greater details, more accurate sequence of events. As she does this, she will have more adequate means of seeing what are the child's trends of development, his concerns, his directions of energy use, his preoccupations, the checks and balances with which he operates.

Let us look at selected anecdotes taken from the teacher's record of Jackie, aged eleven. Note how she catches glimpses of most of the important aspects of his life:

*September 23*

We went on a field trip this afternoon. Jackie climbed up a tall pine to get needles and cones for the class. He climbed down and took some notes on a piece of paper which he laid flat on the ground and in which his pencil punched a few holes. I admired a small green pine cone Bruce had. Jackie climbed back up the tree and threw me several cones. He found "granddaddies" in the grass. He chased Maxine, who screamed, with one. Then he climbed another tree.

We flushed a rabbit accidentally. Tom cried: "Hey, Mrs. Adams, here's his hole." Jackie ran and stuck his hand into the rabbit's hole. The children were angry with him. They said the rabbit wouldn't come back to his hole.

We found a new tree or tall bush. One of the children asked what it was. Jackie laughed. He said: "Lend me your knife, Mrs. Adams, and I'll show you something."

The boys started laughing. Jackie cut off a piece of bark and said: "Here, chew this—it has a funny taste."

I chewed it a moment and my tongue seemed to feel prickly and rather paralyzed. Pete said: "Aw, Jackie, you shouldn't have given the teacher any of that old 'tickle-tongue.'"

Here Jackie is in a continued rush of action, climbing up, climbing down, throwing down pine cones, finding spiders, chasing Maxine, exploring the rabbit hole, experimenting with whatever he finds. He shows himself at home in the woods, free to relate to things and people. He competes with Bruce, chases the girl, tries to excel in his knowledge and skill of what seems to be familiar to him.

The teacher includes specific action, conversation of direct and pertinent kind, and a fairly complete sequence of incidents; she puts herself into the picture where she fits.

*September 24*

Jackie brought in a baby catfish this morning. He told me his arm had been swollen from infected sores since Friday. He kept saying: "Why doesn't the bell ring? I want to pass around the room and show my catfish to the kids."

At 8:55 I said, "Class, you've only a few minutes in which to finish looking up your four words."

Jackie said, "Gollee, Mrs. Adams, I can't find that first one."

The rest of the class were already through. I told Bob to help Jackie.

"Jackie don't want no help," said Bob indignantly after a moment.

From this incident the teacher learns more of Jackie's interest in live things. He tells something of his health and again demonstrates his freedom in showing his colleagues the things he prizes.

The teacher sees the way he prefers his own interests to what is offered in school. He is seen in his relations to other children. The teacher indicates her own part in the incident.

#### *September 30*

Jackie has been paying special attention to Elsie the past few days. He put a piece of bubble gum on her desk, put his hands into his pockets, cast his eyes up to the ceiling, walked a few steps away, whistling between his teeth. Elsie took the gum, raised her eyes, lowered them, said nothing; but Jackie seemed satisfied. He has been trying to give her clean notebook paper every day.

This gives a sample of Jackie's special technique of showing interest in and getting interest from a girl. The description is fairly specific and complete; it contains some judgment, but for the most part the facts are rather ably summarized.

#### *October 6*

The class chose Jackie and Mort to keep our part of the grounds this week. Both stayed in at recess, so the girls picked up the paper for them. Mort asked what to do about being grounds monitor. Jackie said: "If the kid is littler'n you, make him pick it up. If the kid is bigger'n you, report him to the teacher."

We were talking about good manners. Maxine said: "My folks make me say 'Thanks for the biscuits,' instead of just, 'I want a biscuit.'"

Jackie said: "My papa said he was going to slap me if I didn't quit reaching across the table. He make me say 'please,' too."

This time the teacher caught a situation by sketching in the background facts, by recording who was involved, and by including just a highlight of actual conversation. The anecdote summarizes Jackie's frank manner in passing on his values and attitudes, this time in reference to children who are younger or older than himself.

The second incident is briefed in enough to show the person to whom he is responding, the freedom with which he talks about his home, and something of his personal relations with his father. We also get a hint as to the family's social position.

#### *October 21*

"Mrs. Adams, I couldn't git my homework. My uncle come last night and we went huntin'."

"What was you huntin'?" asked Bob, the only other child not busy.

"'Possums, 'coons, or anything."

"Do you eat 'coons?" asked Bob.

"Naw, shux, they got hands," said Jackie.

The actual conversation, involving Bob, shows more of the family influence versus school demands, more evidence of Jackie's interest in woods and outdoors, and his attitude toward live things. One sees here as in other entries a readiness to explain and defend whatever he does.

#### *October 28*

Some of the children are bringing samples of handwriting. Bill commented that he "didn't see no use in writin' good."

Jackie said, "My daddy can't read and he can't write nothing but his name, and he can git a job anywhere he wants to."

What do we learn from these three factual sentences?—evidence of Jackie's social class level; a comparison of his family background with that of other children; the importance of his father in Jackie's life; and another example of how Jackie plays down the value of school.

#### *November 5*

Our caterpillars have spun cocoons and we hope they will live until spring. The first-grade teacher asked us to explain them to her group, and Jackie volunteered to present her with one. She asked him to explain it, and here is what he said, as near as she could take it down:

"This here worm-looking thing, it's a pupa. It used to be a green caterpillar we found on a hicker-nut tree. It et until it couldn't eat no more and then it turn brown and swivelled up. That there spider-web lookin' stuff, that's its cocoon it's a-spitin' out. It will wind itself up in them webs and next spring it'll bust out."

Here we have a quick summary of the situation and a selection of items which reveal Jackie's readiness to give information to others. The exact wording of his explanation shows much about his comprehension of a biological process, of his assembling facts about things that are important to him, and his sense of what would be of value to his younger audience. To record the native quality of his talk and language required acute listening on the part of the teacher.

#### *November 6*

"We done bought us a better house."

"Yea, it used to be a old store," said Tom.

"Yea, but it sure is a good house. We paid \$650 for it."

"Gollee, that old man was high on that ol' place," replied Tom.

"Yea, but it's got four acres around it."

"Who's all them little bitty girls around there?" asked Tom.

"Them's my sisters and they ain't 'all them.' Ain't but three of them. I got one big sister and two little ones and a little brother. . . . If the weather is pretty this weekend we're gonna git our house papered. Our yard is full of old stumps and stuff. I've dug up a whole bunch of them."

"What are you going to do, Jackie, plant grass?" I asked.

"No'm, flowers. Mama's always got to have lots of flowers."

Here again the teacher, in reporting an actual conversation, has produced an anecdote rich in meaning. We see Jackie's social sphere; his closeness to his family and his defense of his family; his ready exchange of private information with a classmate. We have data concerning his home duties and his involvement in family plans, as well as his regard for his relatives.

### *January 16*

Jackie was late getting back to the room when he went to the toilet just before one o'clock. I called him over to my desk. He seemed reluctant to come and stood about four feet away from me, his head turned away.

"Sit here beside me, Jackie, and let's play with these fractions."

"I don't want to, Mrs. Adams," he said, turning away his head more.

He reeked of tobacco.

This is but a brief explanation of how the contact between teacher and child came about. Yet we catch valuable clues concerning Jackie's attitude toward the teacher, his attitude toward growing up, and his manner of self-defense.

### *March 3*

Today is Jackie's birthday. He told us about it first thing. "But I won't be 12 before nine o'clock." We sang "Happy Birthday" to him. He was cutting up cardboard boxes for me and kept his back turned during the song, appearing unconcerned.

The group's approach and Jackie's response are, perhaps, too generalized in this report; more could have been included. Yet the importance of increasing age and of growing up is hinted at, and we get a picture of Jackie against the background of the group.

These are only a few of the many recordings Jackie's teacher made of him through the year. She uses a quantity of conversation, samples of his schoolwork, samples of his free expression, noon hour and playtime activity, tales of how he spends his free time, comments about him from mother, teachers, sisters, other children. Much of the picture is caught in comments Jackie makes while working in the classroom. The teacher has collected information on his health; his style of movement; changes in energy levels; skills; general readiness for physical contact; attitudes toward

his own body, toward being a boy, toward growing up—all important in their bearing on his general physical and social development.

The teacher has also caught Jackie's feelings toward his family; how he stands in his father's, uncle's, mother's evaluation; what he feels toward living things and people; how he relates to the teacher as a person. All of these shed light on his affectional securities.

The teacher observes him in action with other children; indicates who approaches him and for what purposes, whom he approaches and with what results; how he feels toward boys, girls; how he enters into the whole group undertakings; a general indication of the role he plays, and the status he is trying to win. She thus gives a fairly good indication of his social development among his age-mates.

The conversational topics and language, the attitudes expressed or implied toward school and out-of-school life, the references to ethics and manners, are important in reflecting the kinds of wider social relationships in which Jackie is involved. The frequent and spontaneous actions, the easy pride in what is his, the quick defense of what represents *him*, the outgoingness with which he reveals what he has to offer—these show the extent to which he feels at home in his world. They show also his manner of approaching and handling what he recognizes as problems.

The teacher's style of entry has merits of brevity, specificity, and direct quoting. She includes many comments of Jackie and of others; she identifies the persons involved in the interchange. She includes herself objectively as part of the picture. These are desirable features in any anecdotal recording. Enough factual data need to be included to give significance to any entry. The more specific the details, the more usable the record. The when, the who, the beginning, middle, and outcome of any incident and what it chiefly revolves about are important items to include.

The completeness of an entry is likely to improve with time. The need for completeness becomes more obvious as one tries to use the data recorded and as the teacher herself becomes more alert to what is occurring.

### Gaining a Perspective on the Child

One of the primary values of a good anecdotal record is that it helps the teacher to see the child as a developing, many-sided individual. It helps her to see the relatedness of any one bit of behavior to other types of behavior. It helps her to see an incident in its total context, to give her a truer and more objective perspective of the child.

Let us illustrate this point by selecting a single episode relating to Jackie. The teacher reports that Jackie has been "whupped" at home fre-

quently during the school year, sometimes for poor report cards, sometimes for slipping away for a swim, sometimes for not watching the babies as his mother demanded. One April day his teacher recorded:

He and Rick came in after lunch with their hair wet.

"You've been swimming," I said. Both boys giggled. Most of the class were in 4-H club. Jackie has evidently resigned. We sat around talking, catching up on experiences. Bill told about his horse, Rick and Jackie about swimming. Petra mentioned the new baby her sister is expecting in June.

Jackie said: "One time I'se in swimmin' with George. I played like I'se drownin' an' George he got so skeered he run home 'thou't no clothes on. Mama she come a-runnin' and she was so skeered she got right sick. Papa he whupped up on me plenty."

"Jackie, if you get whipped for swimming, why do you do it?"

"I let my daddy take his fun out in whuppin' and I take mine out in swimmin'."

If the long record of Jackie, quoted in the preceding section, were not available, the teacher would be likely (as would any other adult) to make a gross misinterpretation of this incident. She might conclude that Jackie's family relationships were unhappy, or that the child was indifferent to his father's expectations. Yet, as we saw from the longer record, the opposite is true. The opportunity to see this incident in perspective is made possible by the presence of the record.

To take another example of how one's point of view becomes broadened by the use of anecdotal records, let us look at another child.

A second-grade teacher chose this child to study "because of his general sunniness." The sunniness was there, but all through the year there ran the themes discernible in these entries:

*October 29*

1:20. We were all reading together, and at 1:35 I noticed Sunny had his head on his desk. At 1:50 I went over and put my hand on his shoulder and said, "Sunny, is something the matter?" He sat up slowly and answered, "I guess I went to sleep."

TEACHER: Do you want to sleep some more?

SUNNY: No, I might as well do some work.

(Later) Do I have to go home right after school?

TEACHER: No, you are welcome to stay.

SUNNY: Well. I think I will. My mother won't care if I stay and make up work I missed when I went to sleep.

*November 1*

We had talked about telephones and about holding the line too long, and Sunny said: "It's cheating if you stay on the telephone too long. There might be a fire and someone would want the line."

*November 2*

His mother was at the P.T.A., and I inquired about Sunny and said we missed him and that he was always so happy and cheerful. She said, "I am glad to hear you say that, for at home he is quite moody and wants to have his own way." She told me that when she is having stories sometimes he doesn't want the story and goes to his room and closes the door. (Sunny has a brother of five and a sister of four.)

*November 12*

His responsibility had been to keep the reading chairs in place and every little while he would go up and move or straighten a chair.

*November 24 (After a 3-day absence.)*

He came up to me, just smiled, and opened his mouth. I noticed he had a tooth lost and said so. He replied: "The man didn't take my tooth."

TEACHER: What man?

SUNNY: The sandman! Now I can leave it out on my pillow again.

*December 1*

He greeted me with: "You know, John has to go to the hospital soon for an operation."

TEACHER: John who?

SUNNY: Our John. (A boy in the classroom.)

*December 2*

The tardy bell rang and I was at the door when Sunny came in. In passing me, he said: "I got slowed up by a funeral." After he had gone to his desk he came hurrying up to me, "I thought John had gone to the hospital this morning, but he's sitting right there at his desk."

Later he came and said: "Too bad John has to go to the hospital. I'm going to make a car or something and give his mother for John." (John was absent this afternoon and has gone to the hospital.)

*February 22 (Noon)*

When I came back from lunch at one o'clock, Sunny's mother met me in the hall. "Mrs. C., Sunny didn't come home for lunch and I wondered if he had come back to school." I was very much surprised. I knew he had left the building.

When the children came in, they knew Sunny was lost and were much concerned.



JOHN: I was talking with Sunny and a little kindergarten boy came along. We were playing and Sunny pushed him over in some lime dust. The little boy ran home crying. Sunny ran, too, and the last I saw of him he was running down the alley by his own house.

OTHERS: Maybe he has been kidnapped.

Maybe he was afraid to go home.

I should think he would be hungry.

While we were talking, Sunny's mother came in and we told her what we had said. She left and about an hour later Sunny's little brother came with a note saying Sunny had come home. He was hiding out in the field back of the house. He had pushed a little boy, was very upset, and would not come to school until morning.

His mother told me later that just as she was about to call the police Sunny walked in. He was quiet, cold, and pale, but he wasn't hungry. He didn't know why he hadn't come home. The mother told me she had had trouble with the little boy's mother at other times. The other mother thought her boy could do no wrong and Sunny's mother had told the children it would be best not to play with the little boy.

#### *February 23*

I greeted Sunny as usual. He went into the dressing-room and I heard him say: "It's none of your business. I just wanted to."

After reading these excerpts from the record, we have a much different picture of Sunny than the one given by the teacher at the beginning of the year. We are less impressed with his "general sunniness"; we see the complexity of his situation—his worries and preoccupations, his relations to himself, to other children, to his mother. The nature and complexity of the child's struggle with the world are revealed, but only after the data had been drawn together, read, and re-read.

As one tries to see the meanings of varying situations, as one seeks to piece together the information about a child, one is confronted by the many forces which impinge upon him, the interrelatedness of elements he has chosen as meaningful to him, the objects, relationships, ideas, ways of doing things he has made his own. His dimensions, the shape and direction of his living style, his interpretation of what he represents to the world and what the world means to him—these now become apparent in all that he does.

In bringing together the pictures of a child one has recorded over the school year, a teacher is able to sift out the facts which summarize the physical, affectional, and social development which is occurring. In a particular child one wants to see the baseline of his maturity level in physical growth, the physical comforts, the energy flow, the use of his body; the attitude he presents toward his appearance; the concern he shows for, and the real condition of, his health; the control of his growing body. These

data may be gathered in informal and incidental ways, as we have already illustrated.

The child's at-homeness among people, the feeling of being someone of worth with persons who belong to him, is one of the most important bases for a child's learning and the basis of his approach to all aspects of his living. A teacher can learn to know better whether a child has gone forth hindered or supported by his home ties, limited or freed by them.

As one increases the appreciation of interrelatedness of all aspects of a child's life, and as one learns to see a child as a dynamic, ever-growing, ever-changing organism, one may find it necessary to increase the understanding of what is involved. As one's insights deepen, one's need for verifying information increases, and the start of a new type of professional growth may be made. This growth may be based on learning to handle more skillfully what is contained in an anecdotal record by observing additional children, by studying the records other persons have made, and by turning to published materials, research studies, and books on child development. These will aid the teacher in knowing what to expect from children of different developmental stages and will help the teacher broaden her understanding of the one child she is observing and of all children.

### Seeing the Child Change and Develop

It is important to catch a view of a child at a given time, but it is even more important to see how he is changing. Sometimes the changes are not seen until one studies the accumulated written evidence gathered over a period of time. Changes in behavior patterns may show how well a child is meeting the demands appropriate to his own maturity.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes one has to go to other sources of information. Other school records, other teachers, comments of parents, comments of other children may be used to fill out the picture.

In studying Jerry, a twelve-year-old boy in seventh grade, his teacher, looking over his record, finds that physically he "appears tall, strong, healthy, has a deep voice, is boyish." He is able to sit for long periods in concentrated reading or study. He once indicated that the three things he would like most to have are "good health, a shotgun, and that hungry people in Europe be fed."

Early in the school year the physical-education teacher indicates that Jerry is "well-built, plays well, doesn't come out to play in the team games."

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter Six for a discussion of developmental tasks in relation to levels of maturity.

The mother reveals in a conference that when Jerry was a baby he "would sit on the porch until he was called, before he'd play with anyone else." Although she thinks he loves basketball and football, he didn't play in those games this fall.

The record shows him scholastically equal to most of the group of twenty-six children. He is frequently chosen by other children as one they want to work with, and one they would like for a friend. Yet he is seen with only one friend, a boy whose mother disapproves of him.

When the teacher changed the seating arrangement in the room "to mix the group and improve the morale," Jerry, after a few days' trial at the table of the boy who was group favorite, asked to be allowed to sit away from the others. He gave as an excuse that he did not want to be tempted to copy his work. This is the teacher's record:

TEACHER: If you really want to move, I'll try to arrange it. Why do you want to?

JERRY: It's awful hard to keep from looking . . . like in spelling.

TEACHER: I haven't noticed you do that much; in fact, I've been proud of your depending on yourself. Anyway, you seemed to be so happy when you were moved to this table that I don't like to move you away, for I like you to be happy.

JERRY: Well.

TEACHER: When you feel tempted, move to another table of your own accord. Then you could come back here. Would that help?

JERRY: I think so.

TEACHER: Shall we try this for a while?

JERRY: It's okeh.

In a February self-evaluation, Jerry put himself in the middle third of the class in school performance. The teacher, on the other hand, considers him in the upper bracket. He rates himself low in "being courteous and considerate to others," and low in "having constructive attitudes as a group member."

Entries made in April indicate "radical changes" in Jerry, as seen from the teacher's point of view:

He was rebellious about reading poetry. Asked if they "had" to.

Some boys circulated a petition. Jerry talks noisily about it.

Is very hard to manage—talks loudly, looks up at me to see what I will do when he is sure I'm looking.

Two other teachers have said Jerry has gone into a slump. I'm especially concerned about his not living up to his high ideals. I saw him copying today. He knew I did . . . he seems to want to be "bawled out."

In an April self-evaluation he indicates as his idea of a really good time "going out with girls, hunting, fishing." He wants trucking, engineering, or ranching as a career. He sees himself as "exceptional" in personality, "above average" in industry, reliability, leadership, good influence. He puts himself below average in "scholastic zeal" and "maturity."

The teacher thinks he has "become burlier." She records that he gained three inches in height, ten pounds in weight during the months of September to April.

We would surmise, from piecing together the various information we have about Jerry, that he is entering puberty. He is now faced, in April, with a new set of impulses, interests, and developmental tasks. The behavior seen as "rebellious," and "hard to manage," takes on new meaning when seen in the context of the accelerated physical growth and new interest in "going out with girls." Defiance of the adult is a concomitant of this level of development.

Seen against the earlier picture—not wanting to "copy," accepting the teacher's suggestions, and so on—the teacher may be reassured that Jerry is not suddenly becoming a "problem child," or that Jerry has always been "difficult." The record indicates that the changes which are occurring are natural, and the teacher is not to become over-anxious about them.

It is not until the teacher has attempted to sort the data into various large aspects of the child's life—physical, social, self-developmental—that she sees what the child has to work with, and what kind of a self is emerging. The summarized data should be such as to show what are the child's assets and handicaps. The child as he is now, and as he is changing, should come forth fairly clearly even after a first try at keeping a record of a child. The picture improves as one repeats the experience and as the analysis becomes more thorough.

If the observations have been adequate, the interpretations should be open to agreement by other interpreters of the same material. The picture the record gives should be a basis on which a teacher can assess whether the school has planned adequately for the child's development, or what might be some of the areas in which help is most needed.

Sometimes when a teacher goes over the whole picture and sees what the child has been trying to handle in his own world, she is faced suddenly with the question of whether his needs have been adequately considered. She realizes that the needs were there, whether or not she recognized them. This question sometimes bothers her, particularly if she is a sincere, conscientious person. It is sometimes disturbing to see some of the implications which arise from a better understanding of the child. Yet those who have used anecdotal records frequently say that they now see, in a new way,

how much there is to learn, and they feel freer to grow along with the children. They are consoled that they may spread the load of "error" over a wider and more lively history of creative relationships.

### Using Anecdotal Records in Teacher Study Groups

The anecdotal record may be used as a device to sharpen one's own observation and interpretative powers, first on one child, then on others. When used as study material by a group of teachers, the anecdotal record becomes even more valuable.<sup>2</sup> A study group may work together on one record, or may study parts of the records of each member. Each member should keep a record of a child and the group preferably should represent a wide range of teaching levels.

The group serves many purposes. Having to communicate to others what one sees in a child's behavior is a healthy spur to accuracy and is a guide to what the record should contain. The group, if it operates freely, will ask who is involved, what actual words were said, who initiated a situation, what really happened, what was the outcome. Such questions make for completeness in anecdotal recording. Effort to get an incident in its entirety further sharpens one's observation ability.

The group will serve also as a stimulation for improved accuracy and completeness of the entire picture of a child. Gradually the recorder will include phases of a child's life which she had originally overlooked.

When the materials are interpreted for possible meaning, pooled thinking is an advantage. If there are six persons in a group there may be from six to twenty possible hypotheses as to causes for the child's behavior. These hypotheses will suggest what further information is needed and thus expand the informational content of the record. Group thinking can become a lively means for learning to become more objective, not only in recording behavior, but in understanding one's own part in it.

The possible causes for behavior suggested by group members may point to the wide variety of causes for similar behavior. This aids in developing the point of view that children faced with seemingly similar situations may interpret them differently, that behavior has varying causes, that each individual has his own set of reasons for behaving as he does, that children, though they differ, may share in a common process of development—these understandings lead to insights which are essential to healthy human relations.

<sup>2</sup> American Council on Education. *Helping Teachers Understand Children*. Washington: American Council on Education. 1945.

As others in the group exchange their records, the group members understand other children as well as the one they are studying. A study group would preferably have a scattered representation of age levels and experience ranges of children. It is sometimes possible to point out behaviors and to get a perspective about ways the same trend is observable in a second grader, a fifth grader, an eighth grader. The comparisons help show that children go through their various processes at different rates and within a normal range of comparability. These considerations may reduce overconcern about a child who is going through a temporary phase of development.

The study of the records can take many directions and have many uses, depending on what the group agrees is the most important need. Occasionally a group will feel it can best satisfy its wants by discussing problems *per se*. Someone is sure to suggest a dozen or so other school needs which could be studied in the time taken by the child study sessions. Whatever the topic, however, it will eventually turn to what meaning it has to the child involved. And to get at this meaning, the group will need information about the child himself.

The group may agree to focus on the nature and meanings of a child's many modes of expression. It may wish to expand its approach through use of supporting published research. There is much written about how children grow and learn to be what they are. Much of it has been sifted and interpreted into useful form for teachers. A group may wish to use such research functionally to answer questions raised by a specific record they are studying. Since each child differs as to how a principle might apply to him, the anecdotal record might be of great value in bringing fact and principle closer together.

Now and then a teacher realizes that what she does not know about a child may sometimes cause her to act against the child's benefit. Since a similar experience is likely to have occurred, and will continue to occur, to almost everyone who has worked with children for as much as a day, there is comfort to be had in daring to face one's possible errors in a group of whom this is also true. One gains the feeling that there may be fewer errors as information and understanding increase.

Observing a child in action for a school year may seem to some teachers a great chore. Unless some helpful meanings and usable data occur as the study of the record proceeds, this negative viewpoint may be justified. A good working group can sustain itself by encouraging frank expression of the feelings of the group members as time goes on. The group can help one another with shortcuts and suggestions about techniques and meanings. A kind of co-responsibility for professional understanding of teachers' difficulties, as well as those of the child, develops.



The anecdotal record may be used as a focus for group thinking to lead to further exploration of principles of child development. It may serve as a means of a group's assessment of child behavior and teacher-child relationships. It may be used to point up curricular needs.

Records of numerous children can point up a common ground in which developmental needs are or are not being met within a school situation, and can serve as clues to replanning school procedures. The use of anecdotal records has, in some instances, materially influenced school philosophy and practices, has guided an in-service training program to encourage growth of teachers as well as children, and has in general built a professional atmosphere which has vitalized the schools and the community.

### Summary

In summary, anecdotal records may have these advantages:

1. They may be used by individual teachers, small groups, or by a whole school group as an in-service training device.
2. They offer an opportunity to learn through participating.
3. They require no special previous training, but serve as a learning device at the level where the teacher is ready to perform.
4. They may be suited to the time and energy pace of the individual teacher.

*Together, teachers study anecdotal records of children.*

*Superior, Wisconsin, Public Schools*





5. They free the teacher to see and record a child in her own terms.
6. They offer a way of learning to understand a child in the terms he uses to express himself.
7. Since all behavior is meaningful, the selection of behaviors to record is flexible in number and nature.
8. The teacher uses her own experiences and thinking, and has an opportunity to check them against viewpoints of others to increase her accuracy and her objectivity.
9. The teacher learns to convert impressions and judgments into accurate inclusive data which can be used as a growing body of evidence to understand why a child behaves as he does.
10. The time span of recording over a school year permits the teachers to see a child as he changes and matures in many aspects.
11. Group discussion helps the teacher to recognize her own biases in her observations and recordings.
12. Use of the record encourages teachers to gain respect for their own abilities in thinking and observing.
13. The record facilitates use of pooled thinking and co-responsibility in planning for the child.
14. Used in a study group, the record helps the teacher to see children developing at various age levels, thus unifying and giving perspective to information and meanings of children's behavior and development.
15. Participation in teacher study groups gives an increasing sense of differences and likenesses among people in general. This may result in greater tolerance of one's self, and tolerance of a wider variety of children than was previously possible.
16. The teacher may go to research data and to other sources for information which may improve her interpretations.
17. The teacher may learn to reserve judgment and to attain greater objectivity about situations which she cannot immediately interpret.
18. The teacher increases her actual information about a human being in a professional way, not merely to help the child solve his immediate problems, but to gain a view of all phases of his growth pattern.
19. Having a satisfying experience of thinking through and discussing many sides of a problem may illustrate the kinds of learning which could be equally helpful to children.
20. Experience with anecdotal records may encourage a teacher to have closer relations with children, personally and professionally.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

# Sociometric Grouping in Relation to Child Development

HELEN HALL JENNINGS

ANY way of grouping children holds implications for their mental health.<sup>1</sup> Social relations are lived and it matters to the individual *how* they are lived. When an individual is with others who respond to him and whom he wants to be with, he has greater security. The more secure he is as a person, the more released he feels and the more freely he can behave in the group. As he is emotionally freer of inter-personal tensions and doubts and hesitations of different sorts, he can contribute and function better within the total group both as a person and in the role of "learner" in the classroom. The morale of any group increases as individuals find they can contribute and interact freely with one another.

One important obstacle in schoolwork is that pupils do not have the securities they need with each other in groups. A way of overcoming lacks in security is to bring the natural groupings into play, thus preventing (to some extent at least) many individuals and much potential leadership from being submerged. To teachers, it is this consideration that recommends the sociometric approach.

### The Sociometric Test

The sociometric test is a simple method for revealing actual natural groupings and for diagnosing personal association patterns.<sup>2</sup> Each individ-

<sup>1</sup> It is recognized that many teachers now arrange their classrooms in such a way as to separate children who are attracted to one another because it had been taken for granted that this practice achieves a lessening of distraction and hence aids pupils to concentrate upon schoolwork. Investigation reveals, however, that better work in general is done when pupils are in close association with other pupils with whom they want to be and with whom they feel most comfortable. Moreover, many other outcomes of such grouping practice make the teacher's work easier and more enjoyable. For example, see Cornelius, Ruth. "Reading with Six-Year-Olds." *Childhood Education* 26: 162-63; December 1949.

<sup>2</sup> For the first major sociometric work, see Moreno, J. L. *Who Shall Survive?* Washington, D. C.: Nervous & Mental Disease Publishing Co., 1934. (2nd edition now in press, by Beacon House, New York.)

ual is asked to express with whom he would like to associate in a common situation in which an activity is to be undertaken, such, for example, as in a classroom or a factory shoproom.

How pupils are seated in the classroom is always important. For the purpose of seating students according to their choice, they can be addressed about as follows:

You are seated now as you happened to get seated in our homeroom, but now that we all know one another, every pupil should have the opportunity to sit near the other pupils he most wants to sit beside. Then the classroom can be arranged to suit everyone. Write your own name and under it three choices of pupils you would like to sit near in this room. Put a "1" next to your first choice, a "2" for your second, and a "3" for your third choice. I will try to fit in as many of everyone's choices as possible. But since there are many pupils and each of you may be choosing in many different ways, you can see how it is that I can only do my best to arrange the seats so everyone gets at least one choice, and more only if I can figure the seats out that way.

When these choices are diagrammed we have a sociogram. Thus the sociogram is a picture of the choices of the members *for one particular situation* and is valid for that type of situation only.

The immediate possibilities for sociometric grouping will vary in different settings. Thus in homerooms one arrangement may be made for seating; another arrangement may be made for committees, although the same children are involved.

An example of one kind of question is given which some schools use at change of semesters to arrange homerooms on the basis of pupils' choices:

What other boys or girls do you want to be in the *same* homeroom with you next semester? You may give three choices, naming the boy or girl you *most* want to be grouped with as your first choice, then the one you want as second choice, and as third choice. It's hard to arrange room enrollment so that each person will have all his choices, but everyone will have at least one of his choices. We should keep our choices confidential. Some people whom you may not have chosen may be choosing you, since you had only three choices.

In nearly all group situations, there are occasions which come up where people must be aligned in some manner with one another. A common situation occurring in many kinds of groups is the use of committees. *Being on the same committee with you* then becomes the criterion for the choices.

#### Criteria for Sociometric Tests

Whatever the particulars of the sociometric test and its wording, all tests which meet the standard of being genuine sociometric tests have to live up to the following criteria:

1. The situation should be *real* for the choosing; choices are not hypothetical; they are made for an *actual* situation, in the same terms as the action is going to be.
2. The test is not an end in itself; its results are always put into effect to change the arrangements for working or living in accordance with the choices; sociometric arrangement is only setting the stage for a better group work situation.
3. There is an *immediacy* to the choosing: it is for right now, tomorrow or next week, not some vague time in the future or two months later.

In brief, the sociometric technique gives every individual the opportunity to act in his own behalf in a situation in which he is to be involved. The role which is given him has to be sufficient to draw out his most wanted, perhaps most inwardly kept, choices, in respect to whom he wants to be with in the situation facing him.<sup>3</sup>

Thus the manner in which the sociometric question is put is important in securing valid results. Motivating elements should be emphasized. To address a group of boys and girls with, "I'd like to know with whom each of you would like to work on social studies committee work" is insufficient. The question should be put in specific terms:

Each of you knows best whom you would enjoy being with in the same grouping for committee work in social studies, for the times we will be working together. No one can know this as well as yourself. We shall be arranging our new schedule for groups next Monday. Today is Friday, and I can figure out the membership committees by Monday if you would like to choose associates today. We will stay with the same people we choose today for eight weeks, and then we will have a chance to choose again. Keep in mind all the boys and girls you have come to know, whether they are here today or not. Let's give three choices, or four if you like. Wherever possible I'll arrange the groups so that the individual gets all his choices. But it is very difficult to give all people all their choices because lots of people might choose one person. All of them are just as important as this one person.

It will be noted that the individuals can tell, from this statement, exactly what the choices are for, why they are asked for their choices, when the choices will be put into operation, and precisely how long the groupings made from the choices will last before another opportunity for choosing is given. Also, the term "sociometric test" (which possibly can imply right and wrong answers) is avoided, since it is not a "test" in the usual sense of the word.

<sup>3</sup> For a lucid and authentic account of how to begin sociometric procedure in the classroom, see the filmstrip, *Know Your Children*, produced by the Metropolitan School Study Council, Teachers College, Columbia University.

Usually only positive choices are taken. However, in some instances, it is important to provide opportunity for rejections also to be expressed. Again, the manner of eliciting rejections should be matter-of-fact and direct. After the choosing is done, the teacher can say:

Each of you also knows if there are any people with whom you feel particularly uncomfortable in the situation we are choosing for, or who may feel this way about you, where a feeling of uneasiness or annoyance between them and you may come up in the situation. So I can arrange our grouping to avoid this, if there are any people about whom you feel this way, or any people who you think feel this way about you, put their names at the bottom of the paper. If there aren't, leave it blank.

It is important that no implication of one individual judging another is raised. The stress is on the *two-way* nature of negative feelings.

The child's rejections are particularly crucial in situations where tensions or conflicts are high. Then rejection data are needed for better diagnosis of the group dynamics, for locating the urgent group problems. Many of the unaccountably unfavorable outcomes of a teacher's most sensitive work with pupils become understandable when the inter-personal structure of the group is known.

#### **How Choices Are Carried Through**

The techniques of carrying choices into action is built out of a systematic consideration of how to provide everyone with the most he can have in a given inter-personal setting. In doing this, it is understood that choices are used precisely *for the situation involved in the choosing*. This is important because often it is not possible to generalize that an individual choosing certain persons for one situation in his life necessarily wants to be with them in other, different situations. One index of social growth, in fact, is the extent of capacity to relate one's self selectively to persons who in turn respond in particular situations.

Two principles can be followed in carrying out choices for optimal satisfaction: assuring that every individual is provided with some of his choices; and, second, insofar as possible, assuring that the highest degree of choice expressed by the chooser, or the highest degree of his reciprocated choice expression, is used in the grouping.

This, of course, means that an individual who is unchosen or who chooses others than those who choose him receives his first choice, and that an individual whose second choice is reciprocated, but not his first, receives his second choice. When rejections have been taken, the member is placed in a situation where he is least likely to face rejection; he is placed away from those who have actively rejected him as an associate. Under such conditions he is often able to live down his situation and build a positive inter-personal setting for himself.

The mental hygiene aim is to provide the individual with companions, for work or living, to whom he is most attracted and in whom he is most likely to find mutual response. It will be noted, however, that no sociometric grouping can surround each individual *only* with those who are attracted to him; what it does do is recognize and make legitimate the efforts of individuals to reach out to one another and permit them the enjoyment of association with at least some of those with whom they feel affinity, while assuring like consideration in this respect to all members. As sociometric method does this *systematically*, every individual has his particular inter-personal setting made more receptive to him. As he gains greater security in the new arrangement, he can in turn look with more tolerance upon other members in the group whom he may have uncritically rejected before. It is a common finding, for example, that the second sociogram in a classroom, or other setting, almost invariably shows fewer rejections; moreover, the rejections are not so concentrated upon a few members who in a sense were "scapegoated" by the general insecurities of all members.

### The Time Factor

The sociogram of a group is a charting of the dynamic interrelationships expressed by the members of a group at a given time. As such, it should always be considered in relation to the time it was taken. Since person-to-person responses are never static, there are often occasions when the teacher may wish to compare the structure of the group at one time with its structure at another time.

In doing this, it is necessary to keep in mind that while inter-personal relations are always in a state of flux, the shifts in feelings between individuals are not rapid. It is, therefore, important that any second or further sociometric test be given at a time interval long enough to make sense to the group members—to justify it from their point of view. In order that this be true, the time interval must be long enough to register a fairly large amount of change in the structure. The evidence from research in many groups suggests an interim of seven or eight weeks. This interval meets the following essential criteria: from the child's viewpoint, it is felt as the "ripe" time to choose again for rearrangement; from the teacher-educator-group worker's viewpoint it is an optimum interval in keeping up with the developments in social growth occurring in the group as a whole.

There are, of course, situations where particular projects call for a shorter or much longer time span before rechoosing and rearrangement. But the principles applying are the same: the sociometric test should primarily meet the felt needs of the members; it should not primarily meet the research need of someone studying the interactions of the group.



### Group Factors in Sociometric Placement

Whenever any identifiable factor (such as race, religion, or sex) seems to be affecting the choice pattern throughout a group so as to separate individuals along the line of that factor, the sociometric rearrangement of the group members should not visibly betray the group factor cleavages. For example, where boys and girls tend to choose their own sex, the classroom is nevertheless arranged so that boys and girls are spread about; while, of course, at the same time each pupil receives some of his choices.

By following this procedure, the second sociogram is apt to bring to expression the choices which had been unexpressed but felt all along by some members. (It becomes "all right" to say how you feel.) On the other hand, when a group factor related to cleavage is allowed to be revealed by the choice arrangement (in the case of boys and girls, letting the classroom have the appearance of a monastery and a convent side by side), the next sociogram is likely to show the same or more extreme cleavage along the same line. (It becomes "not the thing to do" to choose the "other" people.)

By spreading any minority group members throughout the grouping in the rearrangement, while at the same time placing everyone with someone he wants to be with, such members are provided with a maximal opportunity to become integrated into the group's inter-personal network. Individual "majority" members are thus exposed to a few "minority" group members at a time. They can come to know "minority" members individually under conditions where both have greater inter-personal security in the situation, and where both are potentially freer to develop interest and understanding between them.

An example of sociometric placement which takes into account a group factor of bi-racial composition in membership is given below. It illustrates the care that must be taken in arranging out-of-school groups, which, from the start, will be so cohesive in social relationships that they have high morale and can more readily withstand pressure from other groups in the community.

A six-year elementary school was faced with the problem of forming patrols from among the girls who had applied for membership in Girl Scouts. The new units were to be directed by two teachers. The community setting of the school showed many conflicts between Negroes and white persons. The school itself, however, worked constantly and systematically to keep community patterns of feeling from affecting the in-school life of the children. Classroom sociograms at various grade levels made for the purpose of seating arrangements had shown no cleavage between Negro and white pupils. The hope was to prevent tension from arising within the scout troops.



To assess the situation and plan accordingly, the teachers used a sociometric question: What four girls would you most want to have in your patrol? The accompanying sociogram shows the choice patterns from which groupings for patrols were made. It reveals that some members of each race chose members of their own race exclusively. It also shows, in the group as a whole, a tendency toward separate racial cliques for the situation of scouting, a situation which involves "facing the community."

A possible inference of these findings was that the choice patterns were reflecting an expectation on the part of members of both races, that outside of school they would not be allowed to associate as they did in school.

The placement into patrols may be read from the sociogram. As a troop usually divides into three patrols of eight or ten each, six groups were formed, three for each troop; these are designated by a Roman numeral under each name on the sociogram. One of the two teachers had had previous experience in scouting. She reports:

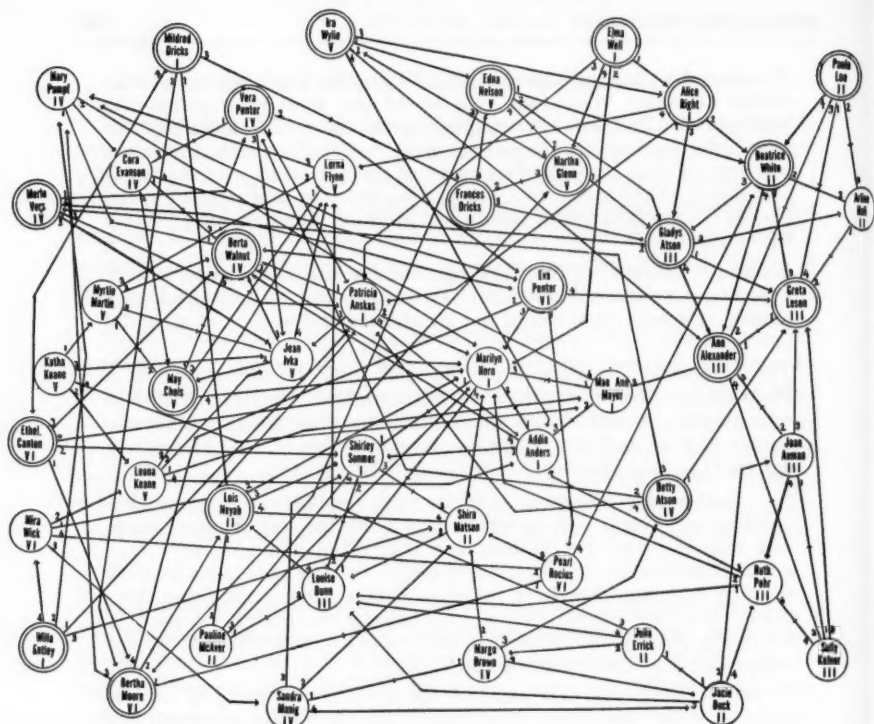
"... Influencing placement was the need for balancing the number of white and Negro girls in each troop. From the sociogram we made sure that everyone got at least one choice but still gave very conscious consideration to the racial situation. A few girls came in after the first meeting; they were asked to state a single choice and were placed with the person chosen... holding to choices, we tried to figure the patrols so that neither race would be overwhelmed by the other. It has worked out beautifully."

It will be noted that each patrol is about equally balanced in composition of white and Negro girls while at the same time every girl but one receives assignment with someone she had chosen.<sup>4</sup> Individuals who are little chosen or unchosen, and individuals who are among the most chosen, are distributed so that each patrol has as balanced an inter-personal structure as possible.

In this instance, a potential intergroup problem was met before it had time to develop. The situation was set so that neither race need feel conspicuous nor know that the other race was probably diffident toward, or perhaps fearful of, scouting with its members. The assignment technique was constructed to aid the members to demonstrate to the community the practicability of inter-racial projects. More important still from a mental hygiene aspect, the groups were so comprised as to aid the pupils in integrating their in-school and out-of-school relationships.

<sup>4</sup> It will be noted that the exception is a girl who has three mutual choices. She might have been placed in Group I or Group II but apparently was asked to enter Group III to balance the size of that group. Whenever, for the sake of an arrangement of the group as a whole, it is considered advisable to ask an individual to forfeit his own choices, the individual asked should be one who it may be assumed can readily develop new relationships and who, at least, has a secure position in the inter-personal pattern shown on the sociogram. The placement should not be made unless the individual is willing to try it after the matter is explained. (For example, "The way the choices came out, several patrols want you. One of these will be the smallest in membership unless you are willing to join it; you are chosen by members of this group, but you didn't choose any of them.")

# GIRL SCOUT SOCIOGRAM



## LEGEND

Sociometric Question

What four girls would you most want to have in your patrol?



— white girl

— Negro girl

— Mutual choice  
— One-way choice

1, 2, 3, or 4 — degree of choice

I, II, III, IV, V, or VI — Group Assigned

## Sociometric Placement for Membership in Two Troops of Three Patrols Each from Sociogram for Girl Scouts Patrol†

I		II		III		IV	
Marilyn Horn		Pauline McAver		Greta Leson	N	Berta Walnut	
Shirley Sommer		Lois Neyab	N	Ann Alexander	N	Mary Pumpf	
Addie Anders		Jacie Buck		Sally Kalner		Cora Evanson	N
Mae Ann Mayer		Julia Erick		Joan Auman		Vera Pantor	N
Willie Entley	N	Beatrice White	N	Ruth Pehr		Betty Atson	N
Patricia Anskes		Arline Hall	N	Gladys Atson	N	Merle Vers	N
Alice Right	N	Paula Lee	N	Louise Bunn		Margo Brown	
Elma Well	N	Shira Matson		*Dora Atson	N	Sandra Manig	
Frances Dricks	N					*Flora Lespie	
Mildred Dricks	N						
V		VI		<p>Note: Influencing placement in patrols was the need for balancing the number of white and Negro girls while giving each person some of her choices. Six* girls do not appear on the sociogram. They entered after first meeting. One girl, Louise Bunn, forfeited her choices on request of teacher for sake of others.</p>			
Katha Keane		Mira Wick					
Myrtle Martin		Pearl Rocius					
May Chols		Bertha Moore	N				
Joan Ivka		Eva Pantor	N				
Lorna Flynn		*Mammie Tow					
Laona Keane		*Lucy Davis	N				
Martha Glenn	N	*Ida Maddon	N				
Ira Wylie	N	*Ethel Canton	N				
Edna Nelson	N	*Elaine Harvard					

†Reprinted by permission of Survey Associates from Jennings, H. H. "Sociometry in Action." *The Survey Midmonthly* 84: 41-44, 63; February 1948.

Another example illustrates how a teacher carried out sociometric placement, taking into account subdivision-membership of the students, in such a manner as to aid them to become integrated into one classroom group:

For various reasons my classroom was full of sets of pupils, six from a different school, six from a different course which didn't keep them as part of the class most of the day, another bunch who were old acquaintances, ten others whom I continually noticed wandering about from one set to another trying to weave in, several who seemed more sophisticated and more or less stuck together, and then strayers. I never knew where I was at with so much bidding for my attention.

The sociogram showed me what committee placements to make, juggling the choices to use those which would cut down the strained relations, and those which would get students together from the different sets wherever there was a thread between them. I had the class as a whole in mind; so to achieve this, I didn't always use first choices, and I purposely kept committee size open, not saying what size committees would be so I could vary how many I put together for the good of all. From the very start of the choice arrangement I had pleasure in seeing how glad the students were as they worked in their new committees. I put the biggest group of eight in the center spot of the classroom; it had a cross-section of everything almost, described above. The nucleus set the pace, spreading its initiative, kindling a new interest, and raising morale by working as a team through the chairman they chose. It was followed by the others around them. I am observing the group growing in self-direction, interest, and unity.

In sociometric procedure, whenever cleavages (which may be injurious to the group's welfare) are found running through a group, these are given first consideration. To do so, it may, as in the case just quoted, be necessary in the initial sociometric placement to provide most pupils only with the associates they have chosen as second or third choices, since their first choices are apt to be for individuals within the particular subdivision with which they identify most strongly. To use the first choices in making the assignments would permit the group as a whole to see, as it were, a public display of the cleavages which otherwise individual members can only guess at.<sup>5</sup>

### The Importance of Genuine Choices

Underlying each sociometric choice of one child for another appears the tendency of the chooser to seek out another who can give him the particular emotional support he needs to function with greater satisfaction to himself in a given context at a given time.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Obviously there are cleavages which are beneficial to group life; consequently each sort of cleavage discovered must be considered and weighed for its effects.

<sup>6</sup> Helen Hall Jennings, in Association with the Staff of Intergroup Education in Cooperating Schools, Hilda Taba, director. *Sociometry in Group Relations*. Washington, D. C.: American Council on Education, 1948.

The individual himself is, of course, the ultimate authority on what *he is feeling* at the moment when a sociometric decision is put to him. This does not imply he is the best estimator of why he is at a particular time feeling as he does toward particular persons. Nor does it imply he is a reliable authority on his own emotional history or on the kinds of emotional patterns he may be exhibiting in his choice behavior. It implies only that he knows toward whom he is emotionally drawn. Moreover, when he is allowed opportunity to be with them, he is found generally to show more maturity in his behavior, act more intelligently, and expand in his attitudes toward fellow-group members.<sup>7</sup> Further, research indicates that the individual's psychology of choice holds great significance for the understanding of personality as well as the dynamics of group behavior.<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps it should be re-emphasized that this refers to *sociometric* choices—actual choices for a real situation which the individual is facing, where he is motivated to give his genuinely felt choices and which he knows will be provided him. Sociometric choices are not the same as the choices which he *seems to be making* when his behavior is observed in the classroom or elsewhere. For obvious reasons, the individual's *observed* behavior cannot be taken as a reliable index to what associates he *wants*; too many factors beyond his control may affect what behavior he shows. (E.g., his own timidity toward approaching someone who is already surrounded by others; his desire to make it appear that he doesn't care to be with those who do not invite him.)

The security of anonymity given to sociometric choices may be also an important factor releasing the individual to express his most confidential feelings. It is understood throughout the procedure that the way in which the sociometric placement was figured out from the expressed choices is kept confidential. The individual does not know that he is, perhaps, unchosen. He knows only that he has been given one or more of his choices; and he knows everyone else has, too. Thus, he can feel he *has a right to be where he is*, and he can, of course, also feel that in all probability some of those placed with him chose him. In any case, the situation was fair for everyone, and no one is placed with others who actively reject him.

Under these circumstances, the individual can have increased feelings of security. Where sociometric groupings are used, the individual is found to make greater use of his capacities than before. He apparently feels more like "being a part of things," through feeling more wanted by specific others.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Jennings, Helen Hall. *Leadership and Isolation*. New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 2nd ed., 1950.

Sometimes a more outgoing manner of behavior will be shown by the individual almost immediately. Among younger children this is often noticed. The record of a boy, Charles, is an example.

Charles had been uncommunicative, apparently disinterested in his surroundings in the classroom. He was unchosen and had chosen as his first choice the most chosen boy in the class. When the new seating was announced, Charles found he had gotten his first choice, Michael. He smiled broadly, rushed to Michael, stretched out his hand to him, saying, "I am happy to be by you, Michael!"

Michael rose to the occasion, saying "That's swell, I'll say!" and proceeded to help him with his things.

In this instance, the two-way effect of sociometric placement was occurring. The over-chosen boy perhaps hadn't known Charles cared so much for him. He only knew he had neither chosen nor rejected him. In the inter-personal security new to Charles, his attitudes toward schoolwork could take on new motivation: namely, to show Michael he could do the work after all. An individual whose opinion of him he valued was now a reality in his inter-personal world of the classroom.

The teacher may be said to have the special role of sociometric mentor: that of encouraging children to express their genuinely felt and genuinely needed choices, through augmenting their experiences of their choice-potential in creating their own life situations in the classroom. Often this becomes, for the teacher, a matter of aiding the individual to regain confidence in his reception and use of choice, to *dare* to exercise choice, when this aspect of his growth has been neglected or blocked or undermined in other settings.

### Significance of Sociometric Networks for Mental Hygiene

The patterns of social relations in a classroom, as in any group situation, represent the network of spontaneous interaction through which communication takes place. From the educational standpoint, it thus becomes important to know how the network of association in any particular classroom is affecting the development of the pupils as individuals and as group members. Does the network point to a full group life in which there is wide understanding and mutual communication among the members? Or does it show a series of cut-off segments with only meager and intermittent connections between them?

The sociogram is only a picture, though a *systematic* picture, of relationships between members of a group; it does not reveal *why* these relationships are the way they are. Neither should a whole series of sociograms be expected to show why the inter-personal structure consists of certain patterns rather than other patterns.

Perhaps the most that can be gained from inspection of a series of sociograms, without reference to supplemental information, is a knowledge of how slowly changes in inter-personal feeling, at least those changes which affect choice expression, come about. Usually it may be noted that the over-all pattern of the sociometric structure is very similar from one time to the next when compared on the basis of like criteria, even though the position of particular individuals may show marked shifts from one occasion to another. See, for illustration, the following series of sociograms on the same group, taken over a period of two years and three months.

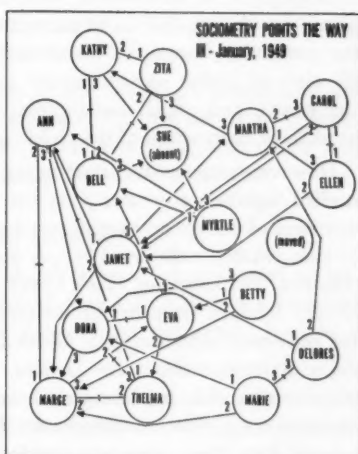
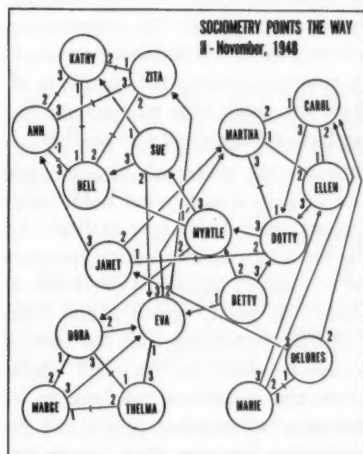
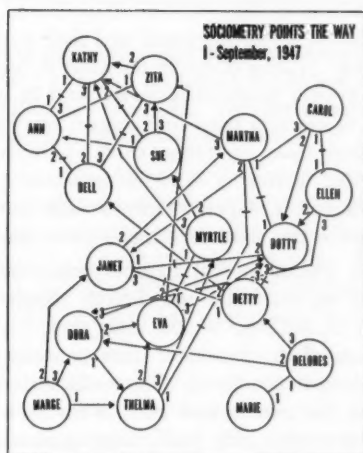
The extent and kind of changes noted in the patterns on successive sociograms may be related to numerous factors, the most important of which may be the role of the teacher in introducing experiences which expand the inter-personal life of the pupils.

Many questions must be raised in examining any sociometric structure pictured in a sociogram. To aid in understanding the patterns children's relationships take, certain specific information is especially important.

What opportunities are there for children's feelings for each other to function openly? May children who want to help each other do so legitimately? Do contexts for collaboration call for a narrow range of abilities, inadvertently excluding participation on the part of many children? Do the routine arrangements result in keeping girls and boys apart in the same classroom? Are the activities conducted on a mass basis whereby a few individuals are brought to the fore to report formally to the whole class? Or are they conducted in small intimate groups that allow interaction and mutual exchange, so that the children get to know one another well and in a variety of situations? Are the children given any reason to think the teacher attaches greater prestige to the children who carry prominent roles well than to other pupils? Do the children show noticeable favoring or disfavoring of certain children which appears *unrelated* to how the latter behave in the classroom? If so, does the school administration, perhaps unwittingly, confirm in its actions or policies the expression of such attitudes? Have the children brought discriminatory feelings into the classroom, or have they developed them there unknown to the teacher?

To assess the meaning to the children of the inter-personal structure operating among them obviously may require painstaking and impartial observation on the part of the teacher on many kinds of occasions. One may notice who says "hello" to whom; which children neither say "hello" themselves nor are greeted by others; which children are run after when they make an appearance; whether minority-group children are regularly seen in clusters or alone. But while all observations will aid in interpreting the meaning of the structure, the values which the children hold may be very well disguised.





A series of sociograms taken at intervals over a period of 2 years and 3 months in a junior high school home economics class.†

The sociometric criterion is: working on the same committee.

It illustrates that the over-all pattern of relationships in a group often changes very slowly even though individuals may show marked changes of sociometric position.

On Sociogram I, the classroom group is seen to consist of three major groupings each held together by a network; on Sociogram III, the same three groupings are traceable although there are some important shifts in their membership (e.g., Ann) and certain individuals have a very different sociometric position than on the earlier occasions (e.g., Marge).

† Reprinted by permission from *Western Home Economics*, and by courtesy of Annette Svantesson. For fuller account, see Svantesson, A. "Sociometry Points the Way." *Western Home Economics* 1. 12-13, 36; June 1949.



A further view into the children's world and their mental hygiene needs may often be required. It may often be obtained through methods which allow each child to project freely in interview and in writing his feelings and ideas regarding others and regarding human relations in general. To be useful, such methods must, of course, carry assurance to the child that the teacher is interested in him as a person and that his expressions will not be subjected to judgment. Open themes to write about and sociometric interviews can also serve the child as vehicles for articulating his feelings.

The interview has special mental hygiene importance. It is rapport-building between teacher and child and directly suggests that the teacher cares about him and his feelings. At the same time, it enables the teacher to become more aware of the particular ways in which different children make an effort to belong in the group. The sociometric interview gives the child a chance to tell the teacher how each of his choices is important to him in order that the teacher may understand and arrange the groupings accordingly.<sup>9</sup> In analysis of such data, what the child does not say becomes for the teacher as important as what he does say. By summarizing the particular statements about choices it is possible to arrive at an overall view of which values appear to be common among the members of the group, and which are unique, and at the same time to estimate the breadth or narrowness of the children's understandings about one another.

However meager the statements, when all the children's remarks are studied together, a greater perspective can be gained as to what holds some members of the group together and sets others apart. In sharper outline may be seen whatever distorted beliefs may be blocking communication between children. For example, "He's Greek, and I wouldn't be caught dead near a Greek; I heard from my grandfather they're no good," given as the basis for expressed rejection of a Greek boy can be contrasted with the latter's main statement about his choices, "'cause he don't hit on me," which suggests that his expectation of others in the classroom has become so undemanding that his choices are based more upon what they *don't* do toward him than upon any positive interaction between them. Such information brings out into the open the specific behaviors which make for cleavage and conflict. Other information, even such a statement as, "He gives everyone a chance," indicates what values work for positive interaction.

Moreover, as the teacher gains a knowledge of the points at which the children's range of experience has limited their capacities for establishing relationships with one another, she can work more effectively in extending their bases of choice and sensitivity. A further purpose can be served by

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<sup>9</sup> For motivating the sociometric interview and technique of the interview, see Jennings, and others. *Sociometry in Group Relations*. Washington, D. C.: American Council on Education, 1948, p. 31-37.

an objective picture of the factors affecting the sociometric structure, namely, to relieve the teacher, as group leader, of the feeling that it is her "fault" if tensions and conflicts are indicated. Sociometric procedure thus can aid the teacher's own mental health as well as the child's.<sup>10</sup>

The teacher in any classroom faces two major teaching problems: she has to have rapport with the individual student and she has to have a close relationship with the class as a group. She often finds herself obliged to swing from one aspect to the other in this situation. Through a sociogram of her group, she is provided with an orientation toward the class as a social group. She thereby learns her way around in the children's society.

The association patterns reflect what the children come to think and feel about one another. Hence, it is insufficient to know what they individually expect and value or what they individually find difficult or pleasurable. Children are taught in groups. They affect one another directly in their affections, doubts, hopes, and predilections. Their patterns of social relations create an atmosphere which teaches many of the feelings and concepts pertinent to their development as persons.

Knowing the inter-personal structure of the children's association, and having studied the meaning of this structure, the teacher is in a better position to take specific steps to aid the children to grow *with* rather than against one another in their common group life in the classroom.

### Psychology of Choice<sup>11</sup>

The inter-personal structures of children's groups, when studied in relation to the children's motivations for their choices and projective expressions, disclose several tendencies that have importance for the mental hygiene of development and growth.

Within the particular sociometric situation and its choice possibilities, the child appears to select others whom he feels he needs as associates for

<sup>10</sup> For discussion of this aspect, see: Birnbaum, Max, and Wolcott, Leon B. "Human Relations Education for Teachers Through the Institute Type Course." *Journal of Educational Sociology* 23: 78-96; October 1949.

<sup>11</sup> This report contains the newest findings on children's psychology of choice, not yet available in other publications. Many school systems in the United States co-operated in the aspects of sociometric study here reported; the analysis has been made as part of the American Council on Education's project, "Intergroup Education in Cooperating Schools," directed by Hilda Taba. The project was made possible through grants of funds from the National Conference of Christians and Jews.

It is a privilege to express thanks to all those teachers with whom the writer enjoyed collaborating and whose painstaking efforts brought advances in our understanding of children's choice behavior. Specific acknowledgment for their graphic material used in this report is due Jean Brooke of Pittsburgh, whose community-school work with Girl Scouts provides illustration; Deborah Elkins of Hartford, whose eighth-grade sociograms are represented; and Annette Svantessen of Denver, whose sociograms from a home economics class over a period of time are included.

the satisfaction this association gives him. At the same time, such selection represents the maturity levels of the children involved and their present state of mental health—these, in relation to the context of the group and of the tasks facing them. The child chooses in a “graduated manner,” by degree of choice, another child who has either better contact with problems which trouble him, or a more skillful way of dealing with equally difficult problems; or he chooses a child who temperamentally complements him in a way that puts him more at ease; or he chooses a child who in some other manner is more than a duplicate of himself. It is as if the child looked around to find another who could offer assistance toward growing up and was willing to do so.<sup>12</sup>

In such analysis, the degree of choice must be noted, because the clearest picture of these trends can be obtained only by observing the “upward,” in the sense of, toward maturity, direction the choice expression takes. It might be called the *psychological staircase phenomenon* of children’s sociometric structure, as it can be traced in all children’s groups.

Study of the child’s *first* choice reveals a pronounced trend to select someone who he feels gives him what he needs very much as a person at the particular time.

When I come to school and I don’t feel too good, she will cheer me up and she is always a pal; she is always happy and she makes others happy too. When I am with her she cheers me up.

Well, I act silly because I’m nervous, and he acts silly out of being glad. He’s always showing me how to hold on to myself.

He’s above most people in conquering things that have happened to him, the same things have happened to me. Gee! Can he take it!

For *lower* degrees of choice, the basis for choice is less clear. Sometimes it appears that the child admires another child of whom no particular help is expected—the chooser reaching out toward someone who may have great need of him, and of whom he is making no demands, but who in turn may choose him on a first choice basis.

Even in primary grades, these trends are indicated when other types of data are analyzed in relation to inter-personal choice expression.<sup>13</sup> As early as the third grade, for example, children’s writings on such themes as, “My wishes if a fairy godmother should come along” reveal, when studied in relation to their sociometric choices, that a given child tends to turn in his first choice to someone who is, as compared with himself, somewhat more critically realistic in his wishes regarding his world, somewhat more con-

<sup>12</sup> This is, of course, not meant to imply that the child is fully, or even to any great extent, aware of the significance of his choice behavior.

<sup>13</sup> See Chapter Fifteen, “The Child Tells About Himself Through His Creative Products.”

fidant he can do something about it, and who shows a somewhat "healthier" fantasy life.

For example, a given child may express hopes in terms of absolutes impossible of fulfillment; or he may express no hopes at all; or he may express fantasies which suggest that anxieties are overwhelming him. Thus, Paul, who wrote, "I would ask my fairy godmother to change me to anything," chooses Joan. Joan's wish is, "I would ask my fairy godmother to make my father nicer than he is." While Joan reciprocates Paul's choice, it is on a lower degree of choice. As her *first* choice, Joan chooses in an "upward direction." She chooses Susan who is under less stress than herself, but who is not so distant that she cannot understand, sympathize, and offer emotional, if not practical, assistance to Joan.

Similar trends appear in study of children's home situations in relation to their use of sociometric choices. For example, the child's home setting may be so harsh as apparently to force him into an absolute sort of fantasy, or into almost no freedom for fantasy. The child from such a home, for example, makes the wish that his fairy godmother would "make me happy," and directs his choices toward those who find it easier to face their problems, or who have less severe settings to deal with than he, and who thus may have available more emotional strength or confidence to offer. Such choices may represent the child's locating another who is not too distant in experience that he cannot comprehend the chooser's situation, and who is at the same time better equipped emotionally to provide aid and challenge.

The trend in the projective aspects of the writings of children who are most securely located in the group, as indicated by their sociometric position, suggests that they have struck a balance between extreme fantasy and critically realistic assessments. It is as if they are more able than other children to remain in direct touch with their own realities and, at the same time, to "lift" themselves in the play of imagination. Thus, it may be inferred they are able to offer other children an outlook that has some romance and color and, at the same time, suggest strategies for fixing up the "here-and-now."

The child appears, in the direction his choices take, to be preserving and building himself as a person. If the school setting provides him with opportunity for such association to the extent he needs, a second trend in the psychology of the child's choice behavior is then noted: he shows differentiation in his choices in accordance with the kind of group situation with which he and others are faced.

### Meaning of Differentiation in Choice

*Differentiation in choice expression*—according to whether the situation is "collective" in the sense of calling for common endeavor in common activities, or "non-collective" in the sense of leaving it up to the individuals

in what manner they will use their time and efforts—is shown when children are at the same time allowed opportunity for sociometric expression in both sorts of situations. If only the “common-goals” situation is allowed (as in studying chemistry or mathematics together in a class), the pupils often use this opportunity as the only available occasion for seeing and being with the individuals who mean most to them in a personal sense. Under such circumstances it is impossible to determine the extent to which the interpersonal structure might have been different if the same pupils were also having opportunity to associate informally as they wished during some other regular occasions in the school day.

The two association patterns are essentially different—in structure, function, and significance—although there is almost always some degree of overlap between them. The one pattern, oriented around the particular needs of individuals for interacting with one another, called a *psychegroup*, permits the uniqueness of each individual as a personality to be appreciated and allowed for, with varying degrees of spontaneous indulgence and affection between the members. This association pattern may be said to be based upon the individual's counting “altogether” as a person in the esteem and regard of the other participants. The other association pattern, called a *sociogroup*, is oriented around the collective group setting and the accomplishment of its collective aims.

The focal emphasis in the sociometric structure that develops in the *sociogroup* is upon the individual's role in respect to the activities which are considered the group's official responsibility (as in an algebra class, learning algebra). In the *psychegroup*, the focal emphasis is upon the members' person-to-person responsiveness to one another; there is no official obligation to associate with each other.

Among individuals at the adult and near-adult level, research discloses a very clear picture of differentiation in choice expression, resulting in the *psychegroup* and the *sociogroup* as two ends of a continuum. Along this continuum certain kinds of grouping show varying degrees of similarity to the characteristic sociometric patterns found at the two extremes, depending upon whether the grouping in question reflects more or less emphasis upon “personalized-role” or “impersonalized-role” interaction.<sup>14</sup> Among children, on the other hand, the picture is much more complicated and only a few general aspects of the tendencies they show can be reported.

The two patterns of association must be studied for the same children to note their importance for the mental hygiene of personal development. The nearest approximation of *psychegroup* relations can be arrived at by use of a criterion for choosing which allows the child to select others simply

<sup>14</sup> Jennings, Helen H. *Leadership and Isolation*, Part IV. Sociometric Differentiation of Groups. New York: Longmans, Green and Company, Second edition, 1950.

for close association in an informal setting. In school, such a criterion is *sitting nearby in homeroom*. The structure of *sociogroup* relations can be found through use of any criteria appropriate to the collective situations of a more formal sort, as *working on the same committee in social studies*. Each "official" group setting, as it offers common obligations for special performance, will reflect a different alignment of the interrelations among the members.

When the same children choose on two such criteria—seating in homeroom and working together on mathematics—there is found very extensive overlap in the directions their choices take on both sociograms, if at the same time they are having very little opportunity to interact on a personal basis. That is, under such circumstances many children choose the same other children for both associational settings. However, as children are provided with opportunity—in homeroom seating, club programs, or other occasions within the classroom life itself—for associating according to their *own* wants, they begin to differentiate in choice of one another around the skills or task criterion called for in the official setting of particular classroom work.

Moreover, the children show, in their expressed motivations for choice, appraisal of one another according to ability to carry on the task involved. "He knows how to plan it out so we don't get stuck, and he figures and you figure till it comes together, more complete."

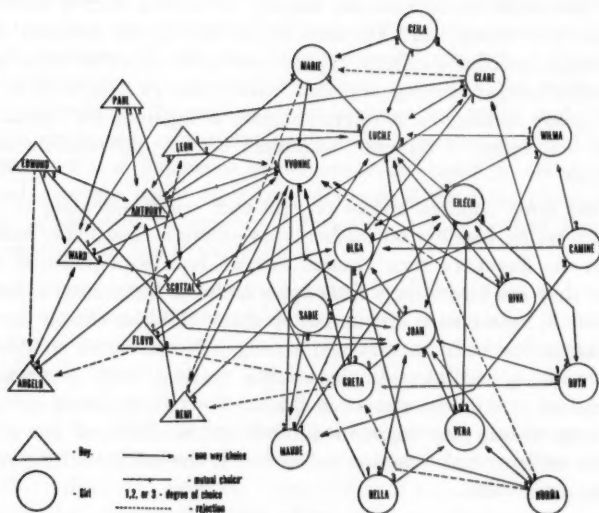
A set of two sociograms of an eighth-grade class, taken on two criteria, homeroom seating and working on mathematics, is given for illustration.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> There can be noted, by comparing the two sociograms, some of the differences which can be expected to appear between choice-structure based upon more exclusively personality-to-personality interaction or psyche-group motivations, and choice-structure based upon interaction in which the exercise of specialized skills is called for—when, as in this instance, the members of the given group are permitted considerable autonomy in forming their association patterns and in communicating with one another generally. For example, it will be noted that nearly all members differentiate between those they choose on each criterion or between the degree of choice they express for particular individuals, for association in the contrasting settings. It will be noted, too, that the mathematics-sociogram is more "pinnacled"—it shows a greater concentration of choice-volume upon much-chosen individuals and a greater number of unchosen—than the homeroom-seating-sociogram. In the present instance, the teacher's ranking of the pupils for ability, interest, and performance in mathematics, approximates very closely the order of rank in choice-reception as a co-worker in mathematics shown by the pupils in the sociogram.

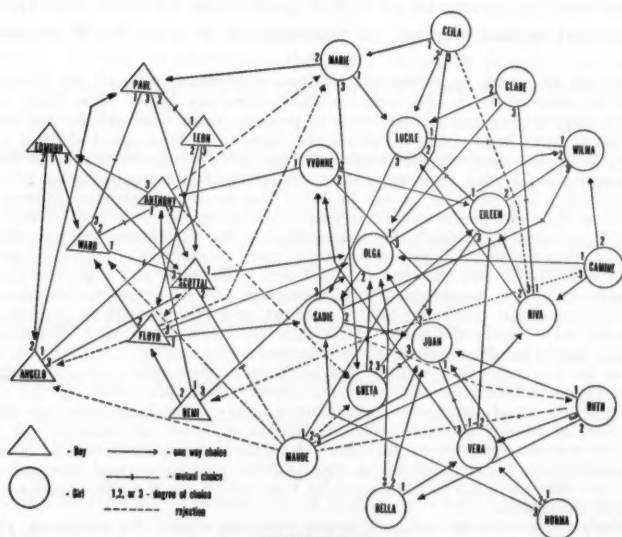
When, as in this sociogroup setting (for work on mathematics), an overwhelming choice expression is found focused upon a relatively small proportion of the group members generally (and consequently resulting in many individuals being unchosen), it should not, of course, be taken as an indication of "poor adjustment." It may, as in the present example, be an indication that, throughout the group as a whole, there is appreciation and recognition of those members who are most able and most willing to aid other members in the particular tasks which are the official concern and obligation of the group.

Particularly the number of unchosen, or any other *one aspect of a sociogram*, should not be taken as a sole index of any given group's manner of functioning. Each sociogram requires interpretation in relation to the total setting of the individuals involved.





AN 8TH GRADE CLASS  
SOCIO-METRIC CRITERION: WORKING ON MATHEMATICS



AN 8TH GRADE CLASS  
SOCIO-METRIC CRITERION: HOMEROOM SEATING



Thus, exchange on a *personal* basis appears to be a need of the child. If this need is not fulfilled, the individual is hampered in developing relationships for other kinds of association, such as working-collaboration. The latter, more "impersonal" context for relating to others is apparently more readily recognized by the child when, at the same time, he is having interaction and acceptance by others in group settings calling for no academic or special skills—in group settings which are based simply upon personal communication.

It is as if, through satisfactions coming to the child as a *person*, he becomes "free" to think of the official objectives of the group and able to function better as a "worker," a "learner," relatively detached from more "private" or personalized concerns. He has apparently less need to bring inter-personal relationships related to his "private" life into situations in which these are not the major or official consideration of the group endeavor. Opportunity for children as individuals to sustain one another on a person-to-person basis through interaction satisfying to them as *persons* (i.e., not as readers, or spellers, or arithmetic-doers) appears necessary to the child's growth—necessary, that is, if the child is to develop capacity to relate himself selectively to other individuals according to the objectives of group settings in which he finds himself.<sup>16</sup>

Thus the extent of overlap in choice expression on contrasting sociometric criteria appears as an index of the extent to which the group life program of the school as a whole is meeting the psychogroup needs of the children. The less extensive the amount of overlap, the more suitable the program may be inferred to be—suitable, that is, for enabling the children to grow up emotionally and socially, and for enabling children to participate with others in many kinds of group situations.

The development of the capacity to relate to others selectively in terms of the kind of situation confronting him appears to be only gradually achieved by the child. Age and past experiences in inter-personal relationships, as well as in the immediate atmosphere of the group situation, affect

<sup>16</sup> In this connection, see the studies in recessivism in research in schizophrenia, sponsored by the National Committee for Mental Hygiene (Canada) and the Supreme Council of the Scottish Rite Masons, which report that a child "without a friend" is not accepted by his classmates. Northway, Mary L.; Frankel, Esther H.; and Potashin, Reva. *Personality and Sociometric Status*. Sociometry Monographs No. 11. New York: Beacon House, 1947; p. 51.

See also related findings in an intensive study of boys, age ten to twelve years: Hartley, Ruth Edith. *Sociality in Preadolescent Boys*. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1946.

See also Sandin, Adolph A. *Social and Emotional Adjustments of Regularly Promoted and Non-Promoted Pupils*. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1944. Sandin indicates the catastrophic effects upon the child of severing him from relationships which hold psychogroup importance to him.

See also Northway, Mary L. "Outsiders." *Sociometry* 7: 10-25; February 1944. See also Bonney, Merl E. "A Study of the Sociometric Process Among Sixth-Grade Children." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 37: 359-72; September 1946.

the child's progress in use of his choice-potential. Expecting the child to be a "worker," when he is not also having the chance to be a "person," appears as tantamount to ordering a reversal of the psychological sequence which sociometric findings reveal to characterize the child's development. Sociometric study of the child indicates that he must give first obligation to his evolving self, his needs, and his longings for inter-play with others who are also in the process which is absorbing him, namely, ego-construction, and who are at a stage sufficiently similar to his to comprehend, accept, and encourage him. In the midst of this *great developmental task*, if the child cannot have concurrently the relationships necessary to meeting it with some degree of satisfaction, he apparently is able to turn only with much reluctance to the secondary job of applying himself to *sociogroup* tasks and skills.

The need to be respected as a person appears, then, to be important for the child's psychology of choice. Any method of grouping which is interpreted by the child as generally disparaging to his prestige and esteem affects his spontaneity in use of sociometric choices. For example, in schools in which graduated "ability grouping" is practiced, hierarchical sociometric sectioning by the children themselves appears. At the lower end of this pyramid, even the intra-group relations which develop may be sparse. It is as if the children in this category come to look upon each other as "undesirables."

In an ability-grouped school in a West coast city, the teachers of all the eighth-grade classes asked the children to choose two others anywhere in their grade so it could be planned for them to be together with their choices some of the time. One-third of the pupils on the lowest and second-lowest rungs of the ladder were found not to choose at all. The written slips in one such classroom read: "Have none at school," "I don't have any," "No," "None," "Nobody wants me and I don't care," "I don't want friends 'cause they ain't no good for me," "I don't need friends, I'm enuff of a Big Shot to do by myself." In their opinion, others had given them up, so to speak; and they had given themselves up. In this instance, they guessed correctly; they received no choices from the other classrooms.

Sociometric findings suggest that when children are very young there is a greater degree of unawareness of where they stand with other children, but that this unawareness fades as they become older, each succeeding year bringing with it keener insight."

<sup>17</sup> Criswell discovered that Negro children, as they get older, "catch on" and withdraw for intimate relationships to within their own racial group. See Criswell, Joan H. "A Sociometric Study of Race Cleavage in the Classroom." *Archives of Psychology*, No. 235, January 1939. Thus, it is indicated that racial prejudice, when expressed by a majority group through withholding interrelationships of a more intimate sort, narrows down the field of choice within which the psychological staircase phenomenon operates—the members of each racial group looking, in their

Before the use of sociometric tests, it was not so clear what effect various grouping arrangements within classrooms and between classrooms were having upon the social relationships of the children and, in turn, upon their self-confidence, views of themselves, and their roles as learners. It is now apparent that a method of grouping which systematically utilizes the children's own efforts to socialize themselves through interaction with one another can be a great vehicle toward development.

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choice expression, only within their own racial group for those who can aid their growth toward maturity, rather than throughout the class as a whole. The limiting of the field of choice would similarly be expected in situations in which social-class differences among groups of children are found to distort the extent and kind of relationships between children—hence, in this case, too, the quality of individual development the children might otherwise achieve. See Neugarten, Bernice L. "Social Class and Friendship Among School Children." *American Journal of Sociology* 51: 305-13; January 1946.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

# Informal Talks with Children and Parents

GLADYS WILLCUTT

FINDING out all a teacher would like to know about the children she teaches seems, on the surface, to be a time-consuming, arduous task. Much of this information, however, can be obtained during the regular school day. It is the purpose of this chapter to show how a teacher can learn about her students by listening to them and to their parents whenever she can.

### The Teacher Has Time for Informal Talks

Creating the atmosphere and finding time in which such informal talks can occur are not always easy. A teacher's day is always a busy one. It seems that no matter how well a teacher has planned her work in advance, upon arriving at school in the morning she finds innumerable details which need attention. An attempt is made below to sketch the beginning of a typical day in the life of two different teachers, the second of whom finds time for listening:

#### FIRST TEACHER:

<i>What She Is Saying</i>	<i>What She Is Doing</i>	<i>What She Is Thinking</i>
"Good morning, children."	Walking into the room.	Why do some of them always arrive before I do?
"Do be quiet, children. Either take your seats, or run on out to play."	Going to her desk, she sits down and begins to look through her school mail.	If only I could have these few minutes to check these blanks we have to turn in to the office tomorrow!
"John, run along with the other children; I don't have time to talk to you now."	Checking one of the blanks which is to be returned to the school office the next day.	I just can't have John jabbering at me this morning. My head feels as if it were going to start aching any minute.

**FIRST TEACHER: (continued)**

<i>What She Is Saying</i>	<i>What She Is Doing</i>	<i>What She Is Thinking</i>
"Well, if you must tell me about it, go ahead."	Continuing to check the blank.	Maybe I can get all this attended to before the bell rings, if I hurry.
"Do you always go to western movies? I should think you'd like to try a different kind once in a while."	Leafing rapidly through several books to find a suitable one for Mary to use during the first hour.	I suppose he's telling about a western movie. He always does. I'd be bored to death to go to the same type of movies all the time. I should have asked Mary to find her own book, but she would have asked too many questions while she was doing it.

**SECOND TEACHER:**

<i>What She Is Saying</i>	<i>What She Is Doing</i>	<i>What She Is Thinking</i>
"Good morning!"	Walking into the room.	John is early again this morning. I wonder if Mary is still concerned about her sister's separation from her husband. I must find out. John is moving in my direction.
"How are you this morning, John?"	Going to her desk, she jots something on her calendar, starts to sort her mail.	I shall pretend to be absorbed in my mail. Maybe Mary will start talking to Jane about her sister. Here's John.
"You nearly always go to western movies, don't you? You seem to like them best."	Selecting some books from the shelf for her first period class.	The class could get these books themselves, but John always talks more confidently when I appear busy. Mary is talking to Jane.
"You especially liked the horses, didn't you? You'd like one of your own like that one in the movie."	Filling in the date and the homeroom number on the attendance pad.	I wonder if something could be done about John's having some kind of pet. Art isn't teasing Shirley this morning. Oh, I see Jim is showing Art a gadget. Shirley is near Jim, watching him.

We could go on to describe in the same way all the occasions throughout the day when a teacher can listen and talk to children.

The brief period between classes, whether or not the children move out of the room, provides a listening period for teachers like the second one we have described. Children talk about what happened during the preceding class, or what Henry said in the hall, or what Jane said on the way to school. Maybe they gripe about an organization, its sponsors, or its last social affair which failed to come up to their expectations. If they had difficulty with their homework it is likely to be given expression at this time. Who talks to whom, as they walk about—girls to girls, boys to boys,



*The teacher takes time to become better acquainted with her students.*

or girls to boys—and which students come into the room together is important to the teacher.

If, during the noon-hour, the teacher is in a position to listen to the students she teaches she can learn still more about them. She has an opportunity to talk to some she has not yet contacted that day. If there are noon-time activities she can talk with some of the students who seek her out. Parents, too, if they are at school during the noon-hour, may talk a few minutes to a teacher who is willing to listen.

There is probably no time so valuable for listening as the time when classes are in session. To move from one small group to another, listening and talking, offers the teacher an opportunity to gain valuable information. Henry tells of something his father has done that was similar to the work at hand; or Frank says his mother told him how this particular task was done in Italy.

During the course of the regular day, the teacher receives fragments of information, bits of knowledge which, put together, tell her many things about the child. Then, of course, there is the after-school time—after the make-up work has been done and the questions about homework have been answered. The teacher can then sit and listen to students who stay longer than the others, because they seem so much in need of someone who will listen to them. In some cases, of course, the child should not stay late, or the teacher may find it impossible to stay. However, on those occasions when such conversations occur, a teacher almost always says to herself, "I wish this could happen more often."



The parent can be a valuable source of information, although this information may be fragmentary. On the whole, the pattern in our schools is one of very little direct interaction between parents and teachers. For this reason, the teacher should make the most of every opportunity to talk to a parent. This is not always easy, obviously, for unless an appointment has been made, it often seems that a parent appears at school just at the teacher's busiest moment. But the parent who appears only to bring lunch or a raincoat usually stays long enough to enable the teacher to talk to her, if only for a few minutes. In these few minutes, the teacher may learn simply that Jimmy's grandparents are visiting them, but this may be enough to explain why Jimmy has demanded more attention than usual during the past week and why he seems more stimulated.

Another mother may tell the teacher that she and her husband are planning to take Henry out of school the day after tomorrow to go to the circus. They tried to keep it from him, but a friend dropped in with the tickets and Henry found out about it. No wonder that Henry had spent the day being alternately a lion and an elephant!

In order to show persisting attitudes and basic relationships of children in the family, a brief talk between a teacher and a parent is recorded here:

The teacher coming in from recess with her children encountered Mrs. Larson, mother of Terry, one of her third-grade group. Mrs. Larson had been attending a council meeting of parents and teachers. She had Tom, Terry's three-year-old brother, with her.

TEACHER: Mrs. Larson, have you a few minutes to spare right now?

MRS. LARSON: Oh, hello, Miss Hammel. Yes. Terry can take Tom for me.

TEACHER: I wanted to talk to you about Terry's voice.

MRS. LARSON: Yes, I'm so glad you caught that. What is it? Had you felt that. . .

TEACHER: Well, we're not sure, but he seems to be so short of breath, and in after-school gym, he asked to be excused because he couldn't breathe. Then, in music class, Miss Wilton thought he was straining and that he should sing low parts. You know he has a true, sweet voice.

MRS. LARSON: He has? Why, we didn't think he could carry a tune. My husband is always ribbing him. Now just what is this speech training?

TEACHER: Miss Finlay is our speech helper and she feels she would be more secure in working with him if he had a complete physical examination.

MISS FINLAY (just then came along, and after brief introduction, explained): This may be just strain, or it may be a small growth, and I really don't want to work with him until he has his examination.

MRS. LARSON: We've made an appointment for April third. Heavens, it's one thing after another with that boy. First, his teeth, then, his feet. He's so overweight and chunky his arches are all flat! My husband was a great athlete you know, and he is so annoyed with Terry—says he leans way over backward in catching balls, he's so awkward.

TEACHER: Perhaps Mr. Larson is used to adult athletics. Really, Terry does outstanding work in gym. He may just be shouting too loudly in play. Miss Rosen has praised him often.

MRS. LARSON: Well, that's good to hear. You know our little one is such a live wire (speaking of Tom). We just weren't prepared for him and he is so active. Helen was so sweet and Terry was so phlegmatic. Now he's so blustery and you know he "acts" so lately all over the house. We don't know what's real and what's not. Now besides this speech or breathing or whatever, he wants to go to Mass every day and I say it's just ridiculous for a boy that age. Then his trumpet lessons!

TEACHER: Yes, doesn't he do well! The music teachers are so pleased with his progress.

MRS. LARSON: I guess he's just at that "show off" age. As I said, he "acts" all the time, and he never used to.

TEACHER: That's probably because he's done such fine work for Miss Cox. The other day he pretended to be the poor brother, Juan, and had us all laughing. He had every conceivable dialect and kept it up throughout his act.

MRS. LARSON: Oh, really? Maybe he's going to be all right.

TEACHER: I'm sure of it! He's one of our best-liked, all-around boys.

MRS. LARSON: Oh, heavens, that baby will tear your room apart. I feel sorry for the teacher who gets him. He broke another window yesterday, and when I asked him if Greg had helped him break it he said, "Oh, no, Mommy—me do it all myself!" Well, I must go and have dinner ready—I'll take care of the physical examination.

What has the teacher learned about Terry in this five-minute conversation? As the middle child in the family, he is the least favored. The older sister, Helen, is "so sweet"; the younger brother, Tom, is "a live wire"; but Terry is considered awkward, too fat, can't carry a tune, phlegmatic; and the father is "always ribbing" the boy.

The family has given Terry relatively little attention; the mother is surprised to hear of his successes in school. Even upon hearing of them, the mother passes over quickly to draw proud attention to Tom, the baby. And the family thinks of Terry as something of a black sheep—"Maybe, after all, he'll be all right!"

The teacher can make further conjectures. First, Terry's success at school may be doubly important to him because of his lack of success at home; he is probably trying hard to establish his self-esteem; and the fact

that he is one of the best-liked, all-around boys is testimony to the great strength of his inner resources.

There are many other possible questions, all of which remain to be answered, of course, by additional information and further observations of Terry. Is Terry's voice problem a symptom of the stress and strain he is experiencing? Is his "acting" at home a means of finding a more acceptable role in the family? What can the teacher do to help Terry?

There is not space here to develop all the possible implications; yet the example serves to illustrate the wealth of information that may be obtained from a casual conversation between parent and teacher.

### **The Teacher Must Accept and Maintain Her Role as Teacher**

The teacher has a position and a well-defined role in the school's social structure. She is a teacher, and as such she knows the students in relation to their scholastic performance in the classroom and in the school generally. She represents society and its expectations. It takes time for children to see that the teacher can function in any other role than the one society assigns to her. The students must accept, understand, and trust the teacher just as she accepts, understands, and trusts them. It is not always possible to establish this relationship in the length of time teachers and students are together.

A ninth-grade mathematics teacher found that she had unusually good rapport with her students, almost a "client-counselor" relationship. She decided the relationship was probably due to the fact that she had had the same students in mathematics classes in the seventh grade. They had learned that they could trust her and that even those who didn't like mathematics were not "punished" in any fashion for having told her so. They found that their confidences had been respected, and they were treated with acceptant attention whenever they came to her with a problem. The relationship was the result, in other words, of the teacher having been first an acceptant friend.

It is important for the student and the parent to know that the teacher is maintaining her role as a teacher. Realizing this, they do not expect her to establish a client-counselor relationship, or to be a therapist. They know that if the teacher finds disturbing or alarming symptoms in a child's behavior, she will undoubtedly seek appropriate help for the student.

### **The Teacher Suggests and Clarifies, but Does Not Defend**

In maintaining her role, the teacher can suggest or raise questions and can help the student clarify his feelings; but she does not become defensive of her position. Listening is a prerequisite to suggesting. Her suggestions

and questions serve as guides in helping the student in his actions. Therefore, she must listen until she has a clear picture of the student's problems.

The student who has difficulty with his homework, for example, may be helped by talking about it to his teacher. He tells her that he doesn't seem to be able to find the time to do it because he's interrupted so much.

TEACHER: How much time, Jim, do you spend on your homework each night?

JIM: Some nights I work an hour, but sometimes I don't get anything done.

TEACHER: Would it be possible for you to get some of it done before dinner?

JIM: Gee, I don't know. I deliver for Knobb's Grocery and when I don't do that I like to play ball with the fellows.

TEACHER: What do you do after dinner? You've said before, I believe, that you help get your younger brothers to bed.

JIM: Yeah, and that takes longer some nights than others. Then when I try to study they yell at me, keep talking to me even tho' I'm in another room.

TEACHER: You feel that it's a situation with which you have to deal; that if you told your mother and father about it your brothers would feel you were "squealing" on them.

JIM: That's what I'm afraid of. After all, they're just having fun.

TEACHER: Perhaps you could ask your mother to help you. You wouldn't want your brothers to know that you'd asked for her help, but she probably could work with them, talk to them about it, without their knowing that you had complained.

JIM: I suppose I could do that.

TEACHER: Or perhaps you could wait awhile before you started to study, get far enough away from their room so that they'd see the uselessness of calling to you—and then after a few weeks perhaps they'd have forgotten they ever did call to you.

JIM: It'd certainly be worth trying. Then maybe I could get some studying done without having to stay up so late to get it done or else not getting it done at all.

In this instance, the teacher has made suggestions, but not demands. She has helped Jim think through a troublesome situation; but she has not attacked that situation, nor has she insisted that he change things to suit her own notions.

To illustrate the role of the teacher in dealing with a group problem of this kind, the following incident is described.

Students seem to be busy signing a petition. The teacher listens until she feels it is opportune to ask them to tell her about it. She may sug-

gest that they spend some time discussing petitions and their use, raising such questions as these:

When are petitions most useful?

Would a face-to-face discussion of the matter accomplish their purpose more satisfactorily?

Would they be able to defend their desires more ably if they presented them verbally?

Have they discussed the question thoroughly, presenting all viewpoints, before deciding upon petitioning?

Have they thought through the repercussions which might result if their petition was granted or was not granted?

The teacher not only raises questions to be discussed but gets the students to re-state and re-evaluate their problem in the light of her questions. Thus she helps them in the clarification of their problem.

In trying to help students the teacher must be careful that she does not become defensive. She must be able to deal with students objectively and without emotion, even on a problem which seems to be a direct or indirect attack upon her as a person or as a teacher, upon the subjectmatter she teaches, upon the faculty of the school, or upon the school itself. This is difficult, for a teacher has been taught a code of ethics which includes loyalty to her fellow-teachers, the school, and her subjectmatter. She often feels duty-bound to convince a student that her subjectmatter is necessary to his success as an adult, even when its usefulness is not apparent to the student. However, a teacher cannot communicate with the student if she puts such defense ahead of listening, suggesting, and helping him to clarify his problem.

Let us assume a student is depressed because he thinks his work in social studies should have been given a higher evaluation, and he conveys his disappointment to the social studies teacher. The teacher closes off all communication if she defends her action without first listening to the student's version of the situation. Having once listened and accepted his version, she can re-state the student's view and then go on to state her own if she wishes. Perhaps this will be all the clarification that is needed. Or perhaps both student and teacher will go on to reach a common understanding. Even if the present evaluation of the student's work cannot be changed, the path for future action on the part of both has been cleared.

When a child says, "Why do I have to study arithmetic, anyway?" a teacher's first reaction is to defend the place of arithmetic in the school curriculum, in the life of the child, and in the life of the adult. Instead, she may very well accept the question and make it possible for the child to elaborate, to tell her more about the way he feels about arithmetic. No amount of defense on the part of the teacher is going to convince him that

he should like to study arithmetic. First he must talk about it; he must begin to see for himself what some of the alternatives to studying arithmetic would be; and he must come to see for himself what a lack of arithmetic might mean to him not only in the future but at the present time. He can be helped to see that he is an unique individual belonging to a particular family with a certain set of values; that he lives in a community where certain kinds of behavior are expected; and that if he is to remain a member of his social group, he must meet those expectancies.

A child's grudge against another teacher or the school is not going to disappear if his teacher refuses to listen to his criticism. He should be encouraged to figure out when and where the difficulties began; he should be helped to see the cause of the misunderstanding. He may be led to see that it is perhaps a clash of personalities; this might help him to recognize that some of the responsibility for the present state of affairs lies with him.

Johnny, who says, "I don't like Miss Perkins because she's always telling me what to do," can be helped to see that other children do not mind being told what to do. Johnny doesn't like to be directed by anyone, and he is allowing that one phase of his relationship with the teacher spoil all of his dealings with her. Can he be given help in understanding his situation?

It should be pointed out that suggestions can be made both positively and negatively. It can be suggested to Johnny that he talk about the other phases of his work with Miss Perkins. Does she direct him to read interesting books? Does she initiate interesting activities in the schoolroom? Does she provide sufficient playtime? Does she greet him pleasantly in the morning? Does she let him do his share in the work of the classroom or playground? The negative aspects of his relationship to Miss Perkins will perhaps begin to fade during the following weeks if he is led, by positive suggestions, to be aware of the many-sidedness of the relationship.

In the foregoing paragraphs much has been said about listening to students. Parents, too, can be shown what opportunities there are within the school for their children and for themselves. Listening to what the parents have to say gives the teacher a chance to make suggestions either about a child or about the school.

Hearing a parent remark that his child has never had as many friends as he seems to have this year can provide an opening for the teacher to discuss the child's apparent lack of self-direction. The parent who begins with a positive statement about her child's making friends can be encouraged to enlarge upon it; to tell, if she can, why she feels her child has more friends, and how she feels about it. Perhaps only then will she be ready to receive suggestions from the teacher regarding more intelligent self-direction on the part of the child.



Listening to parents may be more clearly demonstrated by a conference with a parent as described by Katherine D'Evelyn in "Did Karen's Mother Want Advice?"<sup>1</sup>

The teacher found it profitable to make an appointment with Karen's mother to insure sufficient time for discussion and planning. To prepare herself for the conference the teacher acquainted herself with the information available in the school records:

Karen, aged nine years, in fourth grade, with same teacher last year in grade three. School reports showed Karen was doing good work, had an easy-going, good-natured personality, but lacked initiative and a sense of responsibility. Her speech was characterized by letter substitutions. Two brothers showed the same speech pattern.

Two sisters, aged nineteen and twenty-one years; two brothers, aged seven and ten years.

Mrs. B., Karen's mother, was a busy farmer's wife, very interested in her children.

MRS. B. (opens the conversation by speaking of the three youngest children): They are just like a second family. The older girls are fine girls, but I should be able to profit by my mistakes. Karen is more babyish than the younger brother. I believe that this is so because the older sisters used to talk baby talk to her all the time.

TEACHER: I believe Bob's speech (the older brother) has had its effect upon her, too.

MRS. B.: Yes, Bob had ear trouble just about the time he was beginning to talk, and he didn't hear well.

TEACHER: He probably didn't hear the words accurately and has had trouble relearning them. Karen probably played with him most of the time and learned the words incorrectly, too.

MRS. B.: Yes, and George, the youngest boy, speaks the same way. For a long time we didn't do anything about it. Now we are working hard on it at home.

TEACHER: I have let Karen work with another girl who speaks plainly. I've found that she can make the sounds, and now she needs practice in doing it. They read together. The children do not help her much as they are used to her speech. I hear Karen is taking music lessons. Does she like her music?

MRS. B.: Yes, she likes it very much. She can play several pieces. She has learned to accompany Bob on his cornet. They played at a recital recently, and I was very proud of them.

TEACHER: I imagine you were. When does Karen do her practicing?

MRS. B.: It takes the children about thirty minutes to walk to school in the morning. Karen stays in bed too late to do any practicing in the

<sup>1</sup> D'Evelyn, Katherine. *Individual Parent-Teacher Conferences. A Manual for Teachers of Young Children*. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1945. P. 10-13.



morning. Just the other day, the boys were ready to go to school and Karen had not yet come downstairs. She hurried when she heard them and they waited for her, but they said they weren't going to do it any more.

TEACHER: It might be good for her if they didn't wait for her. I find she doesn't like to take responsibility. She does an excellent job of things which are required, but has trouble in taking the responsibility of doing things unassigned.

MRS. B.: She is like that at home. She never sees anything to do. She has to be told to do each thing, even though it is the same thing each week.

TEACHER: Does she have any assigned tasks at home to do each day?

MRS. B.: No, she wouldn't get up in time in the morning to do them. She teases and says the reason she doesn't get up is so she won't have any work to do. The boys do various things in the morning. They get up much more easily.

TEACHER: I wonder if her health could have anything to do with her not getting up?

MRS. B.: I don't think so. Her teeth are in good condition, and she had a physical examination before school opened.

TEACHER: Then it might be a good thing to assign some small thing for her to do before school which would not take much time, and require her to do it before she can start for school. Even though she may be late a time or two, the training she would get would be very valuable. The rule here at school is that a tardy child must stay after school. I don't believe she would be late very often.

MRS. B.: Thank you for the suggestion. Is there anything I can do to help Karen?

TEACHER: Yes, she likes to be read to very much, but if it were a cooperative affair in which she did the reading part of the time, I think it would be still more valuable. With the three children and yourself, you could take turns. The children would be getting read to, as well as doing some of the reading themselves.

This teacher failed to hear what the mother had really said. The teacher went into the conference with the preconceived idea of getting two points across to the mother: (a) correcting Karen's speech, (b) building a sense of responsibility. This made her insensitive to the mother's feelings and ideas.

Could we say this teacher had picked upon only negative aspects in the mother's thinking? That she had failed to encourage expression of the mother's ideas? That she was primarily concerned with giving advice?

The purpose of a conference should be the mutual exploration of ideas and problems, and cooperative planning. Giving advice is likely to dis-

courage this give-and-take, because it sets the teacher in the place of authority. We have an example in this conference described above. Here we do not see a mutual exploration of Karen's problems, or cooperative planning as a natural outgrowth of such exploration. Mrs. B. cannot help leaving with the feeling that her opinions are of little consequence to the teacher. And since she had no part in planning, it is doubtful if she accepted the suggestions as worth trying.

We know that suggestions work when the parent has some insight into the problem and is thinking along with the teacher. In other words, the suggestions come as an outgrowth of the free expression of feelings and ideas by the parent and a pooling of the joint thinking of both parent and teacher.

Another consideration in giving of suggestions is the complexity of the home situation. Any procedure to be tried with a given child must be devised in terms of the total situation. Unless the home situation is such that it is feasible to carry out certain suggestions, it is useless for the teacher to make them. This is another reason why suggestions must grow out of cooperative thinking and planning.

In the conference with Mrs. B., the teacher gave suggestions for helping Karen to develop a sense of responsibility; yet she did not know any of the underlying causes of Karen's behavior patterns. Children develop initiative and responsibility when they have the incentive and the opportunity to do so. Was the teacher offering Karen any incentive? Did she try to find out what those incentives might be? The teacher would need to know what experiences in her home were giving Karen satisfactions, and she would need to know the number and extent of the pressures Karen might be trying to meet. The teacher should have done more listening.

Many adults, not only teachers, find it very difficult to acknowledge that often youngsters can solve their own problems as well as, or better than, the adults can solve their problems for them. True, they need guidance in arriving at solutions, but after the guidance has been given, the adult should be willing to accept the solution worked out by the child, even if the solution is not the one the adult hoped for.

If a child is faced with the problem of securing a book to read, he may need assistance in selecting the several books from which to choose. The teacher may feel very definitely that one of the books is superior to the others. However, the child will probably read more carefully, and remember longer, the book he himself chooses.

It is a wise teacher who listens, guides, clarifies, and then sits back while the students make their own decisions.

### The Teacher Talks with Parents in the Home

Teachers can learn much about the influence of the family upon the child, if she talks with the parents in the home. This can be illustrated by an account of a teacher's visit to the home of a first-grade child. The teacher was acting in a professional role; home visiting was a part of the pattern of the school life of the community. The teacher tells about the visit:

Dickey asked to stay after school with me until I left—said his Mother wanted him to stay with me so she could sleep. I left school about four o'clock and walked home with him. He asked if he might hold my hand—said, "I like to hold your hand." I asked why. He said, "Because I like you." I said, "I like you too, Dickey." His little brother saw us coming and ran down the street and threw his arms around me, then Dickey.

When we reached the house Dickey said, "Mother is asleep." I said, "Maybe we'd better not wake her. I'll come again." He said, "No, she told me to wake her when I came home. I'll go tell her we're here." She came to the door in a pair of corduroy slacks, a sweat shirt and sweater. She apologized for her appearance; said she slept in her slacks because they were warm. Dickey put some coal into the stove and got the broom and swept the floor. I remarked that I thought the stove a "dandy," and said, "I'd do my cooking on that!" She said, "Yes, I do most of my cooking and washing on it."

The room was fairly clean, but the mother apologized, saying, "You will have to excuse the looks of the house—I have so little time for cleaning since I'm working, but Dickey does help me a lot. He came in yesterday and washed the dishes before I woke up." He said, "I could cook, too, but Mother won't let me!" She said, "No, you are too little—I'm afraid you'd get burned."

She told the children to go out to play. Dickey asked where he could find his old sweater. She told him it was in the back bedroom. He returned with a black fur coat which appeared to be dyed rabbit and was laughing. She said, "Put my coat up!"—then remarked that she wanted some new clothes, but that her husband had told her to wait until she came to visit him—that they were much cheaper in Mobile than here.

I asked when her husband had left. She said, "Friday, and I certainly do miss him." I asked about his arm, and if he thought they would have to amputate. She told me the following story:

A new doctor (a Captain) had been transferred to the hospital. The Colonel (the doctor who had been so interested in his arm) was away on leave. The Captain came in with his discharge papers, and asked him to sign them. He said to the Captain, "You must be a . . . fool!" and turned his back on him. The Captain had him arrested and jailed. He spent three days in the guard house. The Colonel returned and he was brought before him for court-martial. The Colonel, when he heard the facts in the case, said to the Captain, "Well, you must be a . . . fool!" and gave her husband a 15-day pass. That was

how he had happened to come home. She said, "I'd just like to be down there, and tell that Captain a thing or two, and he couldn't do a thing to me, either." She said the Colonel was going to work with her husband's arm a little longer; that it would have to be amputated above the elbow, if amputated, and he could not possibly use a hook. She said he had been studying accounting and had learned to use a typewriter with his left hand—could type 76 words a minute now; and had also been studying Diesel engines. He had been offered a job here at the Southern depot when he got out of the hospital.

When I started to leave she walked to the door with me. Said she would appreciate it if I would let Dickey stay at school with me every afternoon until I left. She said the next door neighbor keeps Jimmie, but that she did not like Dickey and did not like to keep him. I asked why. She said, "Her son was killed and she thinks Jimmie looks like her son did when he was little. She says Dickey is stubborn and won't mind her. I know he is stubborn, too. His father had to whip him while he was home, because he was stubborn with me, and wouldn't

*Parent, teacher, and child work together.*



mind me!" I told her I had never found Dickey to be stubborn at school, but that I did have trouble with him "not minding" at times. She said she was not going to work very long—the doctor thought she had T.B. last summer because she was so thin, but when she went for an examination, the tests were negative; they found she was anemic and she is now taking medicine to build her up.

I told her that Dickey had a bad nosebleed this morning and asked if he had them often. She said that he did, sometimes just from walking across the floor.

She said she had enjoyed my visit, and asked me to come again.

It is clear that the teacher in this case has come away with a wealth of information about Dickey and with many new insights. The visit to the home has given her knowledge about the mother's anxieties and preoccupations, the warmth of family relationships, and Dickey's acceptance of responsibility at home she could have obtained in no other way. The teacher saw at firsthand why Dickey should stay at school as long as possible. She might, without this visit, have said to herself, "Do I seem to be giving him too much attention by letting him stay?" Or, "Perhaps he fears leaving the school building with the other children."

It may also be possible for the teacher to think about explanations for his not "minding" at times. Is he given too much responsibility at home? Is he worried about his mother and father, and therefore does not really hear a direction sometimes because he is thinking about them? Does he feel free to disobey at school because at school he does not get spanked for not "minding"? Does he feel that the teacher understands why he does not always "mind"?

The teacher has also obtained a picture of the social and economic pressures which are operating upon the family, and how these are affecting the child's development. The teacher may now feel that it is up to her to investigate Dickey's nosebleeds. His mother is preoccupied with her husband's illness which is a present and a future threat to the finances of the family, especially in view of her own anemic condition. It is an understatement to say that after this visit the teacher will be able to work with Dickey in a more understanding and more constructive way.

### Summary

It has been pointed out in this chapter that the teacher cannot accept and listen to the child and his parents unless she recognizes that:

1. *The teacher has time for informal talks.* A conscious attempt undoubtedly has to be made to utilize every available period of time for talks with either the child or his parents. Perhaps it is putting "first things first." She will put these talks first if they yield information, give her insight into the lives of her students, and help her in working with them.

2. *The teacher must accept and maintain the role of the teacher.* In no part of a teacher's life has there been more conflict than in her feelings about her role as a teacher. The word "teacher" seems to stop certain kinds of communication, but if the teacher is an acceptant person and realizes what kinds of information she can deal with, she will relax in the role and be willing to maintain it.

3. *The teacher should suggest and clarify, but should not be defensive.* Defensive behavior almost always prevents a teacher from making suggestions or helping with clarifications. This is true because such attitudes and behavior preclude communication. Her listeners remain silent and seem to be in agreement with her when actually they feel misunderstood, even feel disposed to counterattack.

4. *The teacher should talk with parents in the home.* The opportunity to talk with parents in the home varies from community to community. It is also dependent on many factors, such as teacher-load and distances between the school and the homes. Perhaps this, too, is a case of "first things first," and home visits must seem rewarding enough to the teacher for her to be able to give them her attention.



## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

# The Child Tells About Himself Through His Creative Products

WILLIAM E. HENRY

THE life of the child is lived close to the surface. To children, problems of daily living are real and ever present and at times overwhelming. This is not to say that the problems and daily experiences of the child are not of deep significance to him. On the contrary, it is out of the stuff of these daily experiences that the child's personality develops. Perhaps more than for the adult, daily events take on a significance for the child that is seemingly out of proportion. For the adult, the world is fairly well understood, and his daily activities are routine and generally undramatic. While the adult's concept of the world may be skewed or out of true perspective, there are nonetheless few startlingly new or dramatic events in a day's activities. The adult has already formed a logic that explains each new event and places it promptly into one or another context of familiarity.

The child has not the advantage of years of experience with daily events. To him, the world is still an unknown and unexplored thing. Each new experience furnishes vital data out of which he will build his picture of this unexplored realm. Perhaps his new, and at times dramatic, experiences lead him to believe that the world is a place of terror and unpleasantness. Perhaps they lead him to believe that the world is a place of suspicion and distrust. It is to be hoped that, on the contrary, his experiences will lead him to assume that the world is a place of exciting possibilities, and the people in it intriguing and worth investigating. But regardless of the conclusion he may draw, each of his daily experiences is a crucial one, in that it is an integral part of the image he is creating for himself.

The child has a vital investment in utilizing each of his experiences to the full, since the picture of himself and the world that he creates will give him his uniqueness in later years and will form the foundation and framework upon which he will build his adult personality. Thus, each of these



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*The child's creative work helps the teacher to understand him better.*

experiences must be savored to the full and the implication of each tested. Perhaps it is for this reason that the reflection of these day-to-day experiences pervades the child's thinking and feeling and influences his subsequent behavior.

In a sense, the child builds up a series of hypotheses which he tries to fit to his subsequent experiences. These hypotheses he tests out in all areas of his behavior. If they seem consistent with his subsequent experiences, his ideas become more firmly established, and he tends to assume that they are true. If subsequent events do not confirm his beliefs, he modifies them or develops new hypotheses to explain the world around him.

### **Creative Products Are Diagnostic Aids to the Teacher**

One of the ways in which the child may most readily and simply formulate and test out his hypotheses is in the things which he himself creates, and in the things which he dreams and imagines. Here, where adults exert very little control, the child can experiment freely. Knowing only vaguely what adults think children's fantasies are supposed to contain, and being uncertain what adults dream about and what they create with their minds and hands, he has only one tentative blueprint to follow. This is the blueprint of his hypotheses concerning the world about him, hypotheses built out of the crucial daily experiences of his life. And so he creates and dreams

and imagines in terms of the things he feels most deeply; in these creative products, he formulates and tests his picture of himself and the world.

This is fortunate from the point of view of the child since it permits him to experiment and explore his own feelings at his leisure and without adult censorship. It is fortunate from the point of view of the adult—the teacher, the guidance worker, the psychologist, the parent—since it provides a means of ready access to understanding the real worries of childhood.

### The Child's Conversations

Below are the comments of a five-year-old child. They reflect his feelings and worries, and they illustrate several hypotheses he is developing about himself and the world.<sup>1</sup> He is talking half to himself and half to his teacher, and he says:

Today I'm not gonna be big. I'm gonna be a little baby and you must take care of me. I can't do anything for myself. I can just lie in your lap. I'm tired of being a big boy for a while.

It's awful the way you go on being big. Of course you want to grow big, but you couldn't help it if you didn't want to. You just keep on growing. It would be awful if you didn't like it 'cause it would just go on anyway and how sad that would be. But being big is the best thing, isn't it? When you're big everything happens, instead of just waiting to be big. When you get big you can do what you want to do, and nobody tells you and you don't have to ask. You just go ahead and do what you want. And you can tell other people. That is a good thing. When I get big, I'm not going to be afraid of anything and I'm not going to cry ever. People who cry when they are big are silly. When my mommy cries, she said it's because she loves me and things make her sad. I guess I don't love anybody. I'll take care of mommy and I won't love them to make me cry. I will be very big and strong and I'll kill a lot of people, and I'll take care of people if they want me to but still be all to myself.

But not now. Today you must take care of me. I am a little baby. Only don't tell anyone that. I wish you would pay attention to me instead of always writing. That's being big. You don't have to pay attention if you don't want to.

It would be funny if I were big and you were little. I wouldn't pay any attention to you, and I'd make you do things you didn't like to do. But I guess I won't ever be able to do that to you 'cause I won't ever be able to catch up to you.

On the other side of the ocean, if we were there, we might be dead now. Did you know that? It's not safe there. Not many places is safe. Even this place is not very safe. There may be shooting here someday too. I wish we could run away from it, but everywhere you

<sup>1</sup> These excerpts are from the files of Dr. Mary Fisher Langmuir of Vassar College.

go there is shooting. It makes me dream and I wake up and cry—being scared like that.

Someday if I grow up and I guess I will, I'll have to shoot too. Sometimes I wish I didn't have to grow up. Now, that's why you must take care of me, and we will pretend that I'm a little baby and have a long time to wait till I grow big.

Here, in very direct language, he gives the adult a picture of the real world of the child and shows us how he explores and experiments with the meaning of "being big."

Again, following his mother's brief visit to relatives, he remarks:

My mommy died for a little while, did you know that? She didn't die as long as my father did; just for a little while. Now she lives with me again. Now I have lots of toys and my mommy.

These remarks to his teacher, half in truth and half in fantasy, again show how close the child is to his problems, and how pervasive the daily events are.

### **Play and Make-Believe**

Not all children are able to state their worries and feelings so directly as did this boy. For many children, their worries and their real world of childhood can be seen only indirectly through their creative efforts. Even such a simple and seemingly casual activity as play and make-believe can be extraordinarily revealing of the child's world. Make-believe is of course a creative product of the child; in it he explores and experiments with the picture of the world he is developing. Thus a young boy, playing in the nursery yard with his playmates and teacher, says:

Now I'm going over and kill Hitler, and I'll be right back. You stay here, because you are a lady and men take care of ladies.

The reality of the fact that the boy will not kill Hitler is of course irrelevant here, as was the reality of whether "to love means you must cry" as the boy above thought. What is important for the adult to see is that this boy is exploring his ideas of what men and women are and how they relate to each other. This boy's developing concept of himself as a man is the crucial consideration.

Similarly, when children play with dolls and blocks, they recreate the picture of the world as they see it. They recreate it outside of themselves where they can look at it and explore it at leisure. The child experiments with various patterns of blocks and dolls to see if he can find in them some construction that he feels represents a "right" picture that portrays correctly his image of the world. If the creative effort is less than satisfactory, he alters it or destroys it and starts anew. If it is correct for him, if it seems to reflect the world as he sees it, then he feels satisfied.

For example, here is Tom, twelve years old, playing with a theater of puppets. He holds up the boy puppet and says: <sup>2</sup>

This is Ronny, a bad boy. Boy! Is he bad! He is now at home in bed. His father is downstairs. He wants to get up. Ronny's father is always bossing him around. (Laughs.) But he doesn't get very far as you shall see.

Tom then selects more puppets and acts out the following, changing puppets and using a different voice for each:

FATHER (ugly tone of voice) : Ronny. Get out of bed.

RONNY (sleepily) : Don't want to.

FATHER: You hear me? You get out of bed or I'll . . .

RONNY: Or you'll what?

FATHER: I'll come up there and I'll make you.

RONNY: Don't brag so.

FATHER: You get ready and go to school.

RONNY: I don't want to go to school. I don't like school. Besides—I—I—I—I—I got a stomach-ache.

FATHER: A stomach-ache? You *are* a liar. And you're dumb. You don't learn a thing in school.

RONNY: Why don't I?

FATHER: 'Cause you're dumb. You're the dumbest white boy I ever knew.

RONNY: I'm not dumb. I'll show you. I'll—I'll—I'll—Well, I'll—(Father spans Ronny.)

RONNY: Ow! Ow! Oh, you mean, mean man!

FATHER: Now, you do what I say.

RONNY: I'll run away from home. I will. Wheee—" (Puppet shoots off stage.)

FATHER: Why, you little pup. I'll go after him. (Father disappears.) (The clown meets Ronny.)

CLOWN: Hello. Where you going? I'm Dopey, the Clown.

RONNY: And I'm Ronny, the Bad Boy. I'm running away from home.

CLOWN: Oh. Come with me. We'll find some real fun. (Little girl puppet comes up in clown's place. The little girl is bawling loudly.)

GIRL: I want my mamma. I've lost my mamma.

RONNY: Go away. I don't like brats.

GIRL: I lost my mamma.

<sup>2</sup> Axline, Virginia. *Play Therapy*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1947; p. 34-37.

RONNY: Ain't that just too bad! That is a calamity. (Girl bawls louder than ever.) Where do you live?

GIRL: I—I—I—don't know.

RONNY: What's your mamma's name?

GIRL: Mamma.

RONNY: First name.

GIRL: Mamma.

RONNY: Middle name.

GIRL: Mamma.

RONNY: Last name.

GIRL: Mamma.

RONNY: Now I wonder who is dumb. (Girl screams and cries. Ronny disappears. Father enters.)

FATHER: What's the matter? What's the matter?

GIRL: That boy hit me. (Girl disappears. Ronny reappears.)

RONNY: I did not. I wish I had. I might of. But I hadn't yet.

FATHER: What is your name?

RONNY: Ronny.

FATHER: Ronny what?

RONNY: Ronny Gooseberry.

FATHER: Are you a smart alec!

RONNY: Am I a smart alec? I just hate myself for being a smart alec.

FATHER: Listen, you!

RONNY: Listen, *you*!

FATHER: Why, I'll murder you.

RONNY: Oh, yeah! We'll see about that. (Father and Ronny fight. Ronny beats up the father, who begs for mercy.)

FATHER: I'll send my son after you. (Ronny disappears, then comes up again, this time as the son.)

RONNY: Want me, Pop?

FATHER: You go fix that boy. He beat me all up. (Father leaves. Another boy puppet comes up in father's place.)

RONNY (to boy): You beat up my father. I'll mop the world up with you. (Terrific fight. Ronny wins.) This is sure tiresome. (Girl comes up again. Ronny hits her. Girl bawls and disappears. Father comes back.)

FATHER: Hello, Ronny, Old Pal. If you hit her again I'll spank you.

RONNY: I'll bet you can't.

FATHER: Want to see me try? (Father does. Ronny yells. Father then disappears.)



RONNY: Maybe I should have gone on to school. I'm hungry. Besides, sometimes, I think school is safer.

CLOWN: Hamburgers. Hamburgers. Ten cents. Hamburgers.

RONNY: I only got a nickel.

CLOWN: I'll sell you an extra short one for a nickel. (Tom pops up and interrupts puppet play at this moment.)

TOM: They are hot dogs now. This gets out of control every once in a while. (Tom disappears again.)

RONNY: I'll go home. I better not go home. My pop, he'll murder me. I'll sneak up to my room.

CLOWN: Hamburgers. Ten cents.

RONNY: Here, give me one.

CLOWN (yells): Why, you . . . You counterfeiter you! I want good money. (Ronny hits the clown.) Oh, you hit my nose, my beautiful nose. (Bawls.)

RONNY: This is a very puzzling fact. (Ronny disappears.) (Off stage there are sounds of choking and drowning.)

RONNY: There goes the school bell. I wonder if I should go.

FATHER: Ronny! (Tom again pops up.)

TOM: This time this puppet is the principal.

RONNY: Yes, sir.

PRINCIPAL: Where was you this morning?

RONNY: A . . . A . . . I . . . I had a stomach-ache this morning.

PRINCIPAL: How did you get a—Say! Did you take those apples from my orchard?

RONNY: Can you prove I did?

PRINCIPAL: No.

RONNY: Then I won't admit it.

PRINCIPAL: I'll beat you up.

RONNY: You will?

PRINCIPAL: Why don't you go home to your pop?

RONNY: 'Cause I don't want to.

PRINCIPAL: You better.

RONNY: I'm playing hooky today.

PRINCIPAL: You better not.

TOM: Swoosh! (Puppets disappear.) (Off-stage yells and moans.)

VOICE (off-stage): Oh! I fell in the lake! Oh, help me! Oh! Help! Oh! (Father and Ronny reappear.)

RONNY: Hello, Pop.

FATHER: What's happened? (Ronny knocks Father down.)

TOM (again sticking head up): Ha! He landed right in a mud puddle.

FATHER (sneezing and coughing): I caught a cold. I really got sick. Oh! (Father disappears.)

RONNY: Ha, ha, ha. (Girl re-enters.)

GIRL: I want my mommy.

RONNY: You again. (Ronny knocks her down. Beats her up.)

GIRL (yelling): Wait 'til I tell my poppy on you!

RONNY: I just *can't* wait! (Puppet disappears.)

TOM (popping his head up again): That's all, folks. To be continued tomorrow!

Tom was above average intelligence, nice looking, but seriously mal-adjusted both at home and at school. He was anti-social, aggressive, and insisted everyone blamed him unfairly for the trouble in which he usually found himself. He had a stepfather and a half-sister who was much younger than he and the darling of the family. Tom had spent most of his life with his grandmother, but two years ago his mother had taken him back to live with her and the stepfather.

Here in his puppet theater, Tom acted out what we adults call *play*, but for Tom it was a completely serious and vital drama. The episodes made "good theater" from the point of view of the audience, and it was a truly creative product on Tom's part. But it is easy to see how the real source and motive of the drama is Tom's own life and his developing picture of the world.

It is interesting to observe that the same puppets were used for different characters who were alike in their relationship to him. The father and the school principal represented dictatorial authority to Tom. His ambivalent feeling toward his father is shown by the two parts the puppets played, first beating up the father and then defending him.

The boy's play certainly is a direct reflection of his feelings and worries. It shows again how the child's problems and the child's world are constantly being acted out for the adult to see.

### The Child's Stories

Play is by no means the only area where the adult may look for material that will reveal the inner world of the child. Various types of storytelling are also excellent ways of seeing what the realities are to a child.

One particularly useful technique is called the Thematic Apperception Test. This test is a special series of pictures about which children are asked

to tell stories. From the stories told, the skilled person can deduce a great deal about the personality of the child and his worries and concerns.

Here are two stories told by a seven-year-old boy. The first picture shows an elderly man seated. He has a walking stick in his hand and is leaning over, seemingly picking up a small object or possibly touching his shoe. There are no other figures in the picture. The boy looks at the picture briefly and says:

And so his daddy was making his shoes. And the little boy ran after his mother and bring her back. And so this man was mad. And that is why he had his stick. And so the little boy did not have no mama or no dad.

We are not here concerned with the boy's grammar, or the logic and coherence of his story. What does interest us is the worry he feels about his parents, the love of his father, and his mother's going away (he has to go "bring her back"). The last sentence, while seemingly inconsistent with the beginning of the story, is of special interest because it reflects his feeling of being isolated and deserted.

Again, he tells a story about a picture which shows a road and some fields. On the road is a small truck going in one direction. Approaching it is a wagon containing several people. The boy says:

A pickup and a wagon. Here is a little boy and the little baby and a lady (in the wagon). Here is a lady in the pickup. The wagon was watching and watching and then the wagon got in an accident. This is Jack coming in the pickup, and this is my mama in the wagon. The wagon come all apart and the little boy look for them in the snow and he freeze and die and all the others freeze and die. The other boy took the little boy's coat and went to get the horses and put them back. They start off. Then they got stuck, and the cars got stuck, and Johnny (boy's own name) pushed, and then they went on.

It takes very little interpretation to see that this child views the world as a very chaotic and desolate place, full of accidents and angry people. His feelings of loneliness and unhappiness are amply demonstrated.

But one does not need so formal a technique as a special test to reveal these concerns of the child. The simple stories told in the classroom will often reveal them. For example, here are several short episodes from a storytelling hour in the fourth grade of a city school. The children are gathered in a group and are taking turns telling stories. They were asked by the teacher to imagine that they were someone special and then tell a story about themselves. One child imagined he was a bat, another was a puppy, and so on. One little girl said she was a book and continued:<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> These episodes were provided by Theron Alexander, Department of Psychology Florida State University, Tallahassee.

I'm a book. I was in a book store and a little girl came by and bought me. She took me home. Her mother said to take care of me, but the little girl said she didn't like that book and tore the back off and threw it in the garbage can. The garbage man came and found all my parts and took me home. He put me all back together and then tucked me under his little boy's pillow. The little boy woke in the morning and was so happy to have a nice book.

The gentle and soft quality of this girl is well reflected in her story of the loved book. Perhaps some of her loneliness is also suggested.

Some of the same concern about being loved is seen in the story of the boy that followed. He said:

I'm a puppy. I had lots of brothers and sisters. One day a little girl came in a big car and took me off. I lived in a new house where she and her brother loved me very much. But one day I was going along and a man in a car picked me up and took me off. I don't know where he stole me. I don't know where I am now.

This boy is indeed concerned with the problem of love; but unlike the little girl above, he is terrified with fear of losing love. Some of his panic was communicated to the boys and girls who were listening to this story.

One little boy said:

His story left us up in the air.

And another said to the boy:

But you might have got lost, or killed and just your bones left. You might stumble over bones and not know they were puppy bones.

In this fashion one can see how crucial to the boy and to the whole class were the problems of being loved and losing love. They were interested in stories about books and puppies, but it is the concern about love that underlies both these stories by two children of quite different personalities.

A little girl then got up and told the following story:

I'm an umbrella. One day a little girl was going along the street and saw me in the window. She said to her mother, "I want that umbrella." Her mother said, "No." The little girl said, "I want that umbrella." Her mother said, "No, you can't have it. You have an umbrella at home." The little girl said, "I want it and I'm going to buy it with my own money." (The class giggled.) The little girl went in and bought it and took it home. The mother said, "You will have to go up to your room and go to bed." The little girl said, "No, I won't." The mother said, "Yes, you will." The little girl said, "No." (The class now laughs audibly.)

The teacher asked, "And now where's the umbrella?" But the little girl was undecided. She said, "Well, I didn't know where it ended."

And she was quite right. She didn't know where it ended. Here, then, is a little girl concerned, not with what to do with an umbrella, but with

exploring ways of becoming an independent person. Here in her story-world she wishes to explore just how far she can go in asserting herself against the authority of her mother. The interest of the class was again high. Perhaps they sensed more readily than would the adult that the real topic of discussion was authority and mothers, not umbrellas.

It is not only in the informality of the storytelling situation that children reveal their inner preoccupations. Even in what seem to be fanciful situations do these same feelings come through. Take the following list of rules, for example. These rules were set up by a third-grade group of girls. They had formed a secret society and wanted to have a set of club rules. Between them they worked out the following set: <sup>4</sup>

1. Be nice.
2. When you eat, don't spill.
3. If you have to be something you don't want to be, don't get mad, be it.
4. Bring a penny when you can. If you can't, don't bring a penny. If you can, bring a nickel.
5. Obey your leader.
6. Don't say ha ha, Jimmy does not like you.

For a group of third-grade girls, they did a fairly good job of creating a set of rules to guide their behavior.

It is not only the very young who reveal their concerns through their creative products. Here is a boy of fourteen whose free essays show with vivid imagery his own concept of the kind of person he is and wants to be. We know from other data that Bob is a boy of superior intelligence and stable family experience. He has friendly acceptance of his peer group and freely participates with them. While he is still greatly concerned with self-evaluation and is sometimes inclined to daydream, he is nonetheless a rather mature boy for fourteen and is well on his way to a satisfactory adolescent adjustment.

The following two short essays were written by Bob. He was asked to tell what kind of person he would like to be. In the first essay he writes:

1. THE PERSON I WOULD LIKE TO BE LIKE—If I had my wish, I would like to be about 14 years old and my character would be kind and law-abiding. My appearance would be sort of slender, have a black mask across my eyes, trunks, a short-sleeved shirt, and a black cape across my back.

<sup>4</sup> This episode is quoted in *The New Yorker* of June 28, 1947, under the caption "Secret Society." It presumably occurred in Scarsdale, New York, among a group of third-grade girls.

My occupation would be catching bandits, crooks, robbers, and murderers. I would have a swell recreation. The recreation would be collecting the rewards.

This first essay was written when Bob was thirteen. It requires little interpretation. It is the spontaneous story of a healthy early adolescent interested in adventure and drama and seeing himself as the avenger of wrong. It is especially characteristic of Bob that he should portray himself as "kind and law-abiding." It augurs well for his future inter-personal relationship that he should see himself as both a proper moral person and a person of consideration and kindness.

In the next year, Bob's interests began to change somewhat. They began to show his developing physical maturity, as well as his increased interest in the more real and immediate events of his environment. He writes:

2. THE PERSON I WOULD LIKE TO BE LIKE—The person I would like to be like is John Spencer, because he is rough and he's good and he really gets along with a certain cute blonde with blue eyes. He is also a swell egg. His disposition is OK, too. He's got a swell physique.

Bob's confidence in the essential worthwhileness of inter-personal relationships and his self-confidence are both reflected in these stories.

On the other hand, consider Bob's classmate, Merrill. Merrill is also fourteen and of equally superior intelligence. When he was asked to write about the topic "Remembering," he wrote:

#### REMEMBERING

1. I remember last summer I went to Chicago, and when I went on the escalator, I thought the stairs were moving because they were broke.

2. I remember last winter I made a snow house with a real hand-packed snow roof and walls. When I got in it all fell down and the snow fell on me.

Both of these short commentaries reveal Merrill's feeling of catastrophe and the fact that he views the world about him as one in which many unpleasant things happen. They show little of the assertive self-confidence of Bob's stories. And Merrill's present environment, as other records show, has little in it to give him such confidence. His relations with his peers are most unpleasant. He tends to be disliked by them; he is thought of as a person who never enjoys things, is listless, unkempt, extremely restless. His life at home is little better. He feels rejected by his parents and is generally overshadowed at home by four older and one younger sister. When asked to describe the things he remembers, it is little wonder that he can recall only the unpleasant and the overwhelming.

### Drawing and Painting

It is not only through play, stories, and overt verbalization that people reveal their inner preoccupations. Drawing and painting are additional creative efforts which are equally useful to the teacher in understanding the child. The case of Mary Jane, age fourteen, is one in which the problems of a rather unhappy and distressed girl are shown in some simple drawings.

In Mary Jane's first drawing<sup>5</sup> she portrays the back of the head of a young lady with long curled hair and a wide-brimmed hat. The line that was present on the sheet when she started was a semicircle which now forms the top half of the outer rim of the hat brim. The drawing is simple and innocuous enough until one observes that the face of the girl cannot be seen. She is drawn with her back to us. It is of interest that her first drawing in a test situation should be one suggesting that she would prefer that we did not see her clearly, that there were things about herself she would not care to face.

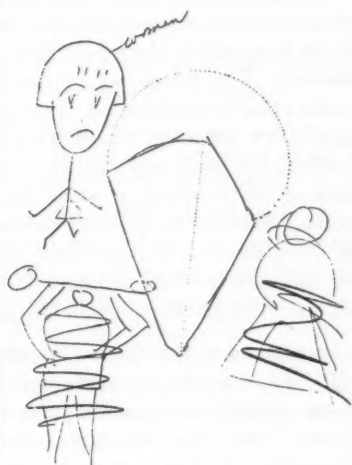
In drawing II she begins to suggest what some of her hesitancy might be about. Here both the drawing about the already present lines and the side drawings are of interest. The lines present are a semicircle, as in drawing I, plus a vertical straight line entering the semicircle from its open side. Mary Jane simply fills in the line, connecting the ends of the lines. The result vaguely resembles an ice cream cone. Probably most important is the simple fact that she makes such a routine inanimate object out of these lines. When people do this, it is often profitable to ask what it is that made the subject apprehensive when this drawing was made. Some clue to this question may be obtained from the drawings that she added to this page. These added drawings can perhaps best be seen as "free associations," that is, as the first things that came to Mary Jane's mind as she drew on this sheet. All three are bad and to her, at least, unacceptable drawings of the female figure. On two of them she crossed out the body, it should be noticed, below the head. On the one completed drawing (top left), also of a female body, she draws a very stiff, unlikelike body and tops it with a head of exaggerated size. She carefully labels this "woman." It would seem plausible to conclude from this that Mary Jane (she is fourteen years old) is afraid of her own body, is not accepting her recent physical development and bodily changes, and feels herself to be an unattractive, undesirable person. Her partial solution to this problem, at least as reflected in this drawing, seems to be to emphasize the head, the intellect, and the rational.

<sup>5</sup> In the drawings shown here, the subject is asked to draw a picture of anything she wants. She is told that she will find some lines already on the papers which she is to use as part of her drawing if she can. Each of the lines is "standardized" in the sense that they represent symbolically certain crucial psychological areas and in that the responses of a large number of children and adults to those lines have been studied. See Krout, Johanna. *A Psychological Study of Universal Symbolism*. Committee on Human Development. University of Chicago, 1948. (Doctor's thesis.)





I



II



III



IV

In this light, her third drawing is of special interest. The actual lines present were a series of tent-like marks which now form part of the hair of the head which Mary Jane drew. Here she drew a head which faces the observer. Two things are of special interest about it. First, the face is rather absurd and distorted. Second, she writes just over the head "buggy, huh." It is almost as though she felt that she were "buggy" and distorted. Further, one might say that she is somewhat preoccupied with the subject, since all of the drawings which she has made so far are of young female figures. Some of Mary Jane's distress and unhappiness can perhaps be seen by now; she feels that her body is an inappropriate and lifeless part of her and that her face is distorted. Further, her thoughts are distressing to her and she thinks she might be "buggy."

In a later drawing (figure IV), Mary Jane tells us a little more about herself. This is a drawing made from a jagged "lightning" line. Mary Jane makes out of it a stern old man staring down from the upper corner of the picture. This is the only figure, other than "distorted" young females, that she has drawn. This in itself is rather unusual for a young adolescent. She has made no drawings at all which show young people together or which suggest any pleasant participation with her peers. They suggest only her distress, her feeling of being a "buggy" and strange girl, her fear of the stern old man. In her last picture she was asked to draw a picture of a girl. But Mary Jane copied a picture of a girl from a magazine, saying that she "just couldn't draw a girl." Perhaps this picture best reflects her confusion about herself and her need for some outside guidance, in this instance the magazine, to decide what kind of a person she is.

Other information on Mary Jane tends to confirm these observations. In her sociometric tests she is generally seen as a person living on the fringes of the group, not accepted by the group, and slightly disturbed. There seems to be some tendency to see her as a person who cannot be depended upon, who would not stick by her friends, or who cannot keep secrets. In other data there is evidence of her feelings of not being loved and of a stern and demanding father in her life.

#### **Comparing Different Media of Self-Expression**

In comparing the various forms of creative effort, it is usually found that they tend to substantiate one another. That is, the personality of the individual seems to imprint itself upon all of the creative effort. In Mary Jane's case, the stories she made up about pictures are of interest. Her distress and feelings of not being a proper, successful person are clearly seen in the following. About the first picture, that of a boy seated at a table holding a violin, she says:

He is probably thinking about how to play a violin and he probably can't get his lesson. He looks like he's more interested in how it works.

About the second picture, a farm scene showing a young woman carrying some books, a man and an older woman behind her, Mary Jane says:

This is a school girl. One man is ploughing. The girl is not watching him, she is watching something else, looks like she is thinking about something. The other lady is thinking about something else, too.

In both of these stories the helpless and ineffective persons stand out—the boy who cannot get his lesson; the girl who is going nowhere, doing nothing, just thinking about things. Notice in the second story that even though there are three people present, she does not relate them in any way. Many girls make this a family, or say that they are all working on a common task, or that the older persons are sending the young girls to school. But Mary Jane even goes out of her way to say that the girl “is not watching” the man and that the older woman is not even thinking about the same things, she is “thinking about something else.”

The third story again points up the apprehension seen in Mary's refusal to face herself. The picture shows a young person crouched down by a couch. Mary Jane says:

She looks like she is crying about something. Something maybe happened?

Again notice that in none of these three stories does Mary Jane give an idea of the ending, of how the story comes out (which she is specifically asked to do in the instructions). She doesn't care to face the possible outcome, the future. Things look too black to her now to think about the future. Two other pictures show family groups. Mary Jane's feelings about family life can be readily seen. The first picture shows a man standing facing a boy and girl. The scene is a fairly pleasant one. She says:

They must have been fighting or he was teasing her. The father is scolding them.

About the second picture showing a man, a young girl, a woman, and a young boy, she says:

It looks like the father is mad about something, looks like he is going to leave and the girl doesn't want him to and the little boy doesn't want him to, either.

Both of these scenes are seen by Mary Jane as pictures of disruption and unpleasantness, an image of the family situation as quarrelsome and threatening.

In countless other spheres of the child's and of the adult's life in any area where he must make a choice between alternatives, the individual

reveals the underlying feelings that guide his behavior and that are crucial to an understanding of that behavior. Especially is this true in areas where the individual creates or imagines or makes believe. In these situations where few guidelines are laid down for him, he can only create according to the guideposts which he himself is developing: his own inner hypotheses as to the nature of things.

### **Creative Activities Are Therapeutic for the Child**

In addition to providing information to the outside observer, creative activities play an even more important role for the child himself. The creative process itself—writing a story, painting a picture, building with blocks—serves as an integrating and stabilizing mechanism for the child. In each of his periods of creative effort, a child is able to explore some area of experience which he may not yet understand.

In his doll play, for example, the child is able to portray his confusion about the birth of a new child in the family. Manipulating a small doll, even hitting it, is quite possible in a play construction. It is quite impossible in real life—without retribution, that is. If a child is irritated at finding a younger child taking his place in the mother's attention, the feeling of resentment is a very real one. Telling the child to be "good," or hoping the feeling will go away, is hardly a solution.

The child's attempt at a solution is often far wiser than the adult's, and usually more effective. By moving the entire conflict out of the area of actual life experience, by moving it into the world of a play, a painting, a block construction, a storytelling session, the child can experiment endlessly with his feelings.

In an impersonal world of paints and blocks and make-believe, experimentation with mixed-up feelings of love and resentment can go on safely—safely for the adults, in that the child does not actually act out his resentment; and safely for the child, in that the playing out does not arouse the retribution of the outside world, nor arouse his own guilt at having feelings of which his parents disapprove. This very exploration also helps the child recognize and express his feelings. Many of his hostile feelings tend to disappear once he has acted them out in his creative products.

The benefits to the child of participating in creative activities, in addition to the sheer pride in a self-made object, are at least two:

1. They permit the child to explore with impunity his confused and often resentful feelings about life experience which he does not yet understand.

2. They serve as an effective catharsis by permitting the acting-out of feelings which the world around him considers improper.

The feelings that are acted out in the creative process are, however, not always the socially disapproved resentments and hostilities. They are often the more positive feelings of love and affection which the child in his naïveté may be loath to express more directly. They are often new and only partially formed ideas which the person cannot yet verbalize, but can only feel and experience. The creative process permits him to explore these new ideas and to live them out in a world uncritical and unbiased.

Once the child has become accustomed to exploring his confused or half-formed ideas in the world of creation and make-believe, and once he has become accustomed to expressing his feelings in this way, he is able to return to the immediate present with increased confidence. With the exception of those very disturbed children who will need psychological aid, there is little danger of the child finding his make-believe world more intriguing than the real world.

The world of creative products is an ideal meeting place for the teacher and the child. To the child it represents an area of endless pleasure, safe experimentation, and satisfaction. To the sympathetic teacher it provides an ideal entry into the world of the child—a ready-made opportunity to increase her sympathy and understanding of the problems of childhood.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

# Sociodrama as Educative Process<sup>1</sup>

HELEN HALL JENNINGS

**S**OCTODRAMA is an intensive, vivid, *living through* of experiences of common concern to the group members—experiences which may have been cut short in life and blocked from full expression, leaving unresolved, buried emotional impact. The process aids the individual in mobilizing his resources for behaving spontaneously and discovering his potentialities of expression. Its educational objective is to broaden the scope and deepen the quality of communication between group members for happier, more comprehending inter-personal living. Sociodrama should always be set within a framework of group participation for discussion and analysis.

The group setting is necessary in order that participants have at hand others who feel in some degree as they do and hence can offer them the psychologically comforting reassurance of the commonness of the experiences being worked out. The audience portion of the group also serves the purpose of providing motivation to the subjects; their portrayals are aimed to enlighten the other members of the group in regard to how they face the same problems.

As children articulate their understanding of sociodrama, simple, direct explanations of its process appear. The excerpts which follow are records of the responses to the writer's asking groups of children who had had a few sessions of sociodramatic experience, "What, would you say, is sociodrama?" The first group of children is in a fifth grade.

Instead of taking things out of plays, we take things out of our lives.  
We show each other, and everyone tells what he sees from what you did.

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter presents the main principles which, in the writer's opinion based upon experimental work in collaboration with teachers and children in the classroom and with adult groups in varied settings, are essential in sociodrama as educative process. The originator of the method is J. L. Moreno. See his *Psychodrama*, New York: Beacon House, 1946. See *Psychodrama and Sociodrama in American Education*. (Robert B. Haas, ed.) New York: Beacon House, 1949.

It's a new way to learn things right away that will help us.

You find out how to get people to understand you.

You talk to them, talk to them plain, try to get them to understand, not holler at them.

By looking at them, not off, like you didn't care yourself.

There're a lot of ways—you might not have to *say* anything.

Listening to pupils in an eighth-grade class we get a more "sophisticated" version of what sociodrama is:

You play different roles, yours and other people's.

You don't *play* them, you *do* them the way they seem to you.

Yes, it's acting the way you *do* act, but not always.

It means you do it like you *think* you'd do it, say, maybe you never was in that situation before.

It's the actions that come out of people—not just their thoughts, you might say.

The action stuff, that's the drama part, and social part, I mean socio part—that's where the people—the society, us, you, even the teacher—is the socio part.

It's to tell you how they feel between them in their actions when you're on one side of it.

The comments of children in a second-grade classroom give us a "feel" of the atmosphere created among them by sociodrama lessons:

It's for you to get to know everybody and me too.

You go in everybody's house and they visit you.

I walked home with somebody who lives far from my house and I showed her my street, what I like on it and what scares me.<sup>3</sup>

We all went to Carl's farm.

It gets real-er and real-er, it's from inside you, sometimes it comes out slow, then gets fast.

It's jolly.

You don't have to be little, you can be big. You can be your mother, your father, even a grandpa.

We got two grandfathers in our class.

We borrow Donald's and Anna's.

We might get to be grandfathers, people live more these days, they wash their teeth.

<sup>3</sup> Child refers to experience in following sociodramatic instructions: We usually walk home with the same people and then other children don't see what our street is like. Today our lesson is learning about streets. Remember, the person you choose to show your street to must be someone who has never been on your street. He won't know anything about it and you show him whatever you like and whatever you don't like, as you go past different things.



You can have brothers and sisters if you don't have any, it fixes your feelings.

A senior student in a high school for Negroes in a segregated midwestern city<sup>3</sup> explains sociodrama as follows:

Sociodramas are used because they not only acquaint us with serious problems, but also give us the knowledge and technique for solving them. For example, many of us, because of our race, find it difficult to secure good jobs. For the same reason, when we go downtown to shop, we are embarrassed. In dramatizing situations such as these, we are called upon without previous preparation, to take a part, perhaps that of a boy or girl who is refused a job because of discrimination. How we react on the spur of the moment depends upon individual natures. Some may give up in despair; some may flare up in angry protest; whereas others may more calmly try to gain the recognition that should be theirs. We then evaluate the various responses of our classmates and decide whose technique is best. . . .

Of course, all of our problems are not racial. (Some may be) situations involving family relationships. (We) may step momentarily . . . into the shoes of a mother who for various reasons disapproves of her daughter's escort to a party. In this way we are able to learn our parents' point of view and gain some understanding and appreciation of their concern for our welfare.

Sociodrama is precisely, as the fifth-grade child said, "a new way to learn things" in which "we take things out of our lives" and "show each other, and everyone tells what he sees from" what is portrayed. Its main uses are, as a high-school student explains, "not only to acquaint us with serious problems," but also to provide "knowledge and technique for solving them." And, as the second-grade child discovered, "it fixes your feelings." When put to systematic use, sociodrama is a tool for reconstructing the channeling of feeling.

<sup>3</sup> Vashon High School, St. Louis, Missouri. Most of the data regarding Negro high-school students in this chapter are from this high school. Educators and students, as well as the writer, are indebted to W. G. Mosley, principal of Vashon High School, St. Louis, for his vision and support in the pioneering experiment which had its start under his auspices in 1947 to test the usefulness of sociodramatic technique to aid Negro students to face their human relations problems in a segregated setting. The writer, then his consultant, wishes to express appreciation to him and to his faculty as a whole for their united work to further research in this area, and particularly to Reja Schnault Mosby, teacher in immediate charge of the program in speech-communication problems. Other faculty members who aided the work are Marguerite L. Armstead, Inez Crenshaw Boyd, Bessie L. Gudger, Jean Donaldson Haynes, Richard K. Fox, Zephyr C. Lane, Horatio Ray McNeil, Lawrence E. Nichelson, Willa Powe, Gloria Mai Pye, C. Spencer Tocus, and H. S. Williams.

The protocols from a fifth-grade class in this chapter represent the teaching of Jean Brooke, of Pittsburgh, to whom the writer is obliged also for much other experimental work. Also, in Pittsburgh, Ann Sommers, Anna Traubert, and Mary O'Laughlin Elliott, and, in Hartford, Deborah Elkins, had important roles in developing sociodramatic technique for classroom use. The writer acknowledges with thanks the aid of innumerable other colleagues in teaching and in other fields.

Sociodrama is concerned with people in their cultural role interactions with one another—the ways in which these roles are conceived, executed, and altered as they come into agreement or conflict with other cultural roles within the same or different societal settings.<sup>4</sup> The roles embodied in the sociodrama are carried by people. Consequently, what sort of person each role-carrier is, obviously must “come through” in a sociodrama in the sense that the members of the audience group and the player himself will gain some knowledge about the “personal” aspects in the performance. This is an asset and not a liability of the sociodrama. It makes the sociodrama more fascinating and enhances the interest of the participants.

On the other hand, a sociodrama should not (in order to capture personal-interaction characteristics of the performers) be so directed that it cannot but become a psychodrama—that is, of significance mainly to the particular subject, instead of to many group members. A crucial difference between psychodrama and sociodrama is the greater emphasis upon the “private” or “personalized” world of the individual in the one case (psychodrama), and the greater emphasis upon what is common in the social roles of one individual with others in the second case (sociodrama). Thus, a “son” has much in common with all sons, and an American of the Negro race has much in common with all Americans who are of the Negro race. But at the same time, the individual in all cases has an inter-personal world which is uniquely his. With the latter, sociodrama has least, and psychodrama, most, concern.

The director of the sociodrama (in the classroom, the teacher in this role) therefore needs to be aware of the following criteria to implement the principles of sociodrama:

1. The situation must be *representative* of the problems of the group members.
2. The majority of the group members must *want* to explore the situation.

As far as classroom procedure is concerned, a third principle might be added—the teacher should be willing to have the problem explored. For example, if the teacher is not as enthusiastic as the students, the latter may try to give, for her benefit, the version of the problem which they think she “can take” rather than that which represents how they see it. Moreover, the freedom on the part of the teacher to explore *with* the group members is particularly essential if the children are to feel free to ventilate in a thorough discussion led by her whatever feelings and thoughts

<sup>4</sup> How the method itself is used mirrors the varying cultures in which it has been applied. See Jennings, H. H., “Military Use of Sociometric and Situation Tests in Great Britain, France, Germany and the United States.” *Sociometry* 12: 191-201; February-August, 1949.

may have been evoked in them by the sociodrama. The value of the sociodrama in activating group members to bring to expression what they had not been able to bring to expression before will be largely lost if this condition does not hold.

In turn, unless the audience group and the participants are allowed full spontaneity of expression during this period of the sociodramatic session, whatever forms it may take,<sup>5</sup> they are less able to go on to the analysis of the sociodrama and marshal their critical capacities in the observations they have made while witnessing the performance. Such analysis as they do make may be attuned to meet with the teacher's approval rather than represent an honest disclosure of what they think about the sociodrama. More important still, the interaction between group members, which is so pertinent to the recall of their observations, through the stimulation they give one another, will be greatly reduced, and thereby the quality of analysis they make will be inferior.

Since much that students will reveal is actually disconcerting to any adult interested in their welfare or aware of some of the deeper significance of the revelations, it is only through experience and practice in conducting sociodramatic sessions that adults acquire the self-control not to interrupt the psychological process which is necessary to a full sociodramatic learning experience for group members.<sup>6</sup>

A sociodrama can be conceived as having a series of main steps, all of which are necessary for maximum group participation:

1. Volunteering of participants.
2. The warming up of participants.
3. Free ventilation of feeling and reactions of group members and the players.
4. Analysis by group members and players.
5. Summary and recommendation by group members.

In practice, these steps often merge, or better said, naturally flow into one another, and the different steps may have less or greater importance, depending upon the significance of "content" of the sociodrama to the group members. But the director needs to recognize the steps in order to serve the group.

<sup>5</sup> For example, it is an inappropriate time to correct a student's grammar.

<sup>6</sup> The sociodramatic director, for example, should not make a "decision" for the group about the problem which is *their* problem; if the group members were emotionally ready to "see" it, they would reach it through their own thinking. The director can be highly effective simply through raising questions which are "open-ended."

### Beginning Sociodramatic Work

In introducing sociodramatic work to children, a consideration should be to begin with situations which are so simple that they can learn the process of discussion and analysis at the same time that they are gaining familiarity with role-taking. As a teaching strategy it is important that group members discover they can, with the teacher's guidance, explore a problem, break it down into factors which may be causing it, and develop ways of meeting it to their greater satisfaction. An example from a fifth-grade class is given for illustration.

Class decides on problem situation: You are doing your homework; your mother wants you to go to the store; you go, come back; you might have to go again because your mother forgets something.

A girl objects, "Usually the mother doesn't forget."

The teacher says, "The problem has to be one nearly all of us are interested in. How many of you ever have your mother forget and send you back to the store?"

All hands went up. Children volunteer for parts.

#### SITUATION I

MOTHER: I want you to go to the store for a loaf of bread and a bottle of milk.

MARILYN: (looking up from notebook) Can't you wait for a little while?

MOTHER: I said to go right now.

MARILYN: (throwing pencil down) Oh, all right! (leaves room)

FATHER: I can't stand the way she talks.

MOTHER: We'll just have to break her out of the habit.

MARILYN: (comes back) Here's your bread and milk.

MOTHER: Put them in the kitchen.

(Marilyn puts them out, starts to work again)

MOTHER: Oh, I almost forgot, I want some Sunbrite cleanser.

(Marilyn sighs, goes out in disgusted manner)

#### DISCUSSION OF SITUATION I

TEACHER: How did the situation come out?

STUDENTS:

The mother got her way but nobody was pleased.

Marilyn went too willingly.

She could have said, "You'll have to wait till I finish my homework."

TEACHER: Can you think of anything that might cause the situation to be the way we saw it?

BOY: Sometimes it's because they (mothers) didn't ever go to school and they didn't get their memories trained.

GIRL: That's how it is with my mother. So you should be patient with them.

BOY: That isn't always why though. Sometimes it's because they feel like bothering you, I guess.

GIRL: It could be both—I mean they want some attention too, like we do.

GIRL: Attention! It's to find out if you like them!

BOY: Stick to the point: The job is to get them over bad habits so we'll know how to get them to see it like we do.

GIRL: When the mother saw Marilyn was interested in her work, maybe she wouldn't have needed to send for the cleanser till later. She could say, "Is it all right if I go before school in the morning?"

BOY: She could ask if her mother needed anything at the store before she started on her homework.

GIRL: You could say a lot of things that might be needed and that would help her to think of others.

TEACHER: What might the mother have said?

BOY: "Finish what you're on. I'd like you to go to the store in about ten minutes."

BOY: I would praise the mother on the times when she didn't forget.

BOY: The mother should have given Marilyn a hit in the face when she talked back and said, "Don't talk to me that way! After all, I am your mother."

GIRL: Marilyn was too fresh, it might fluster the mother and make her forget. Probably the mother had her mind on something else, like the way Marilyn was talking.

TEACHER: We've had a lot of suggestions. Are we ready to see if we can improve the situation?

(Class agrees. Children volunteer for parts.)

#### SITUATION II

MOTHER: I want you to go to the store.

(Betty starts to make list)

FATHER: Get some lunch meat.

BETTY: (looking over mother's shoulder) Do you need lettuce?

MOTHER: No, see if they have any salad dressing.

FATHER: I like Hellman's Mayonnaise if you can get it.

BETTY: O.K. Do you want a cake for your lunch, Dad?

FATHER: Yes, and get me some cigarettes.

Glass evaluates second situation; decides it needs more work, but has been improved: "Everybody was more pleased with each other."

Sometimes such "easy" sociodramatic lessons bring large returns in appreciation from parents as they readily recognize "improvement" in children's behavior which gives a more positive tone to their relationship, particularly when it can be shown in deeds they want done.

One way of beginning sociodramatic action and analysis may be a discussion focused on the fact that all of us, when we are in situations with other people, feel that we do better in some of these situations than we do in others. The class members offer examples of each sort: situations in which they feel they showed themselves "at their best," and others in which they feel they showed themselves "at their worst."

At first, playing-out of "worst for me" situations, the teacher should be careful to use situations which are very frequently given by the members of the class and which, at the same time, are not too intimate. A situation of this sort is that of an older brother who waits up at night for his fourteen-year-old sister to come home; the sister is resentful of his "running her life" and feels she needs no advice from him; the brother is the main financial support of the family; there is no father; the mother stays home and is not employed because there are younger children. This theme is often encountered, with numerous variations: the older person from whom the girl is unwilling to accept supervision may be an uncle, a grandmother, or the mother herself.

### Psychological Sequence

The sequence of situations used should be graduated in difficulty so that there is likelihood of success following the efforts of each student to deal with the situation and also so that he can more readily gain in ability to analyze the situations presenting simple to more complex factors. The following example, taken from a high-school class, is an illustration:

A student enters an office and introduces himself to a potential employer; then the situation is halted.

Several other students play the same situation up to the same point; analysis of impressions made upon "employer" and the student-audience group follows.

In another session, a series of situations "on the job" begins with an employer who is instructed to be amiable and encouraging toward the employee. Gradually, as most of the students show increasingly satisfactory skills in relating to the employer, situations are used in which the employer is instructed to be in a "bad" mood and to behave in an irritating way toward the employee. These situations, in turn, are followed by situations in which the employee is unjustly accused of making mistakes or otherwise confronted with problems on the job.

The discussion and summary following each sociodrama session should be carried through to a point where the students can see to their own satisfaction that they have identified some factors contributing to the outcomes of the situations portrayed, or have located some ways of behaving which would expand their present skills in dealing with the situation under consideration. It is important that students not gain a keener sense of their inadequacies in respect to a given situation without at the same time acquiring an understanding of ways of behaving to deal with the situation. The sociodramatic sequence should enable the group members to discover factors in the situation which may be contributing to their feelings of frustration and, at the same time to discover satisfactory ways of overcoming these factors.

It is of like importance that a class, or any other group, not be left with the conclusion that there is *one right way* of behaving in a particular situation and that all people should behave that way. Similarly, no group should be left with the point of view that some one member among them is "superior" to the others, or that some one member among them is "inferior" to the rest. Care has to be taken in the use of sociodramatic technique to focus it so as to educate through extending emotional insight and comprehension of group members, between group members, and between group members and other groups which may be the object of study.

Application of sociodrama for learning experiences in the classroom should give children an opportunity to reach generalizations about human relations which are psychologically accurate according to our present knowledge. At the same time, it should not be expected that such generalizations be couched in "learned" language. The following generalizations were formulated by a freshman high-school class in guidance:

Every individual is superior in some social performance and inferior in others.

How effective you are depends on your interest in the situation, how you feel about the other people in the situation, what else is on your mind at the time, what chances you had to understand situations like this one, and lots of other things.

What is right in a situation depends upon what outcome the participants want the situation to have and its effects upon other people concerned.

A discussion outline furnished by the teacher has merit insofar as it obliges students to assess the many factors which may be operating in a particular sociodrama. It can thus help students free themselves of judgmental ways of viewing behavior and aid them in achieving keener understanding of other human beings.



### Respecting the Individual's Areas of Reticence

It is important to follow the child's lead regarding what situations he wants to portray. The statement, "I don't feel like it," should be immediately accepted as reason enough—which, indeed, it is. The job of role-building in a sociodrama, if it is to represent the fullest and most authentic projection of the player, requires his voluntary interest and readiness to undertake it. Only when it is done *of one's own accord* without external incitement can the portrayal carry the quality of genuineness.

Any sociodramatic performance given by an individual under forced circumstances affects his capacity to carry the role in question and the result is therefore a distorted version of whatever capacity he may have for that role. Moreover, in a forced portrayal, neither the other group members nor the player himself may be able to distinguish between the points that are valid and the points that are not valid in the picture presented.

In all sociodramatic work, both among children and among adults, it is necessary to recognize that each individual has a need *not* to express as well as a need to express what may be highly significant to him in reference to a given situation at a given time. The best indicator of an individual's readiness to carry a particular role in a given situation is that individual himself.

The teacher's responsibility is to prevent classmates from over-urging any child to take part in the sociodrama:

In a third grade, the children were "living in each other's house" and "meeting all the people where I live." Finally a child said, "Paul should take us to his house—he's got lots of brothers and sisters." The class joined in coaxing him, but Paul said: "I don't feel like it."

CLASS: We want you to.

TEACHER: Paul doesn't feel like doing that situation. Nobody should do it when he doesn't want to. Is there any other you feel like doing right now, Paul?

PAUL: I *would* like to show them my little brother and his imaginations.

CLASS: Yes. Go ahead. Put him where you live.

TEACHER: Paul has to decide himself what he wants to show; maybe it won't be where he lives.

PAUL: It's going to be late at night; no, in the middle of the night, after he goes to sleep and then wakes me, and starts talking. He sleeps with me.

TEACHER: Which one are you? Do you need anybody for it?

PAUL: I want John to be me and I'm my little brother Jackie and he starts imagining—

TEACHER: Just tell John how you are feeling at the moment when Jackie is waking you up.

PAUL: He knows me.

JOHN: Not how you are with your little brother, I don't.

PAUL: Well, I like him a terrible lot and I want anything he wants to come true.

JOHN: OK, I get it.

The sociodrama which followed revealed Jackie describing in great detail an island-existence—not even letters could reach there—which he and Paul would have as soon as he (Jackie) got big enough. They would make families out of squirrels and horses and live happily and nobody would be there, or could come there, “to kick us around.”

The teacher subsequently may discover many causes underlying a child's disinclination to take a particular role. Later the same child may outgrow these very hesitations as he experiences sociodramatic release and learning at *his own rate* within a group of sympathetic classmates.

In leading sociodrama, it is important that the director-teacher use words that have a common connotation or that will carry equivalent meaning to the group members. For example, the teacher should say “where we live,” rather than “in your house or apartment,” to avoid the possibility that children who live under different conditions, as in an orphanage, or over a garage, may feel “out of it,” or feel that their way of living is less desirable (that is, not accepted by the teacher). When care is taken to employ language which covers everyone's situation in the classroom some of the very pupils who might be assumed to be more hesitant than the rest of the class, perhaps through thinking their circumstances are “not right” or embarrassing, are often the ones who show most enthusiasm. Their sociodramatic presentations hence become a means of bridging the gap created by differences in circumstances and of helping to develop insights which widen the understanding between children.

In a fourth-grade classroom Arnold, who lived in an orphanage, had received much praise from classmates for his situation portrayal on the theme: “What comes up between six and nine at night in your life?” Part of the discussion follows:

STUDENT: He's like a father; he comforted the little boy, he said: “You'll get a letter soon.”

STUDENT: And he said, “I'll read you my letter, it talks about you too.”

MARGARET: He's just wonderful!

TEACHER: Margaret, would you explain what you mean when you say “wonderful”?

MARGARET: He loves all the other children where he lives; I love only two on my block, that's Sarah and Josephine.

ARNOLD: If there wasn't anybody around to help people who're littler than you, you would get that habit, Margaret.

ANOTHER BOY: Margaret is kind of snippy; we should crack down on her.

MARGARET: I could practice with Arnold giving me lessons.

(Margaret, class, and teacher plan lessons on "snippiness" to test everybody—not just Margaret.)

### Aiding Group Members Find Their Representative Problems

In working with children or older students in classrooms, it is insufficient to ask them, "What are your problems?" Such a request is too vague even for adults to answer in specific enough terms to aid a teacher in comprehending what the problem really is. Moreover, before any such attempt, there should be an effort on the part of the teacher to "warm up" the group to the venture of identifying their problems. How this is done will vary from one classroom to another according to the teacher's acquaintance with the students and what their curriculum has been.

Any instruction in locating problems, however, should be put in *situational* terms. The following examples illustrate ways of doing this.

#### SOCIODRAMA SAMPLING SCHEDULE

Instruction for surveying representative problems: Only those questions given below which seem useful to a particular class should be used. The teacher should discuss with the group members and select according to their wishes. After a group selection has been made, the answering should still be completely voluntary. No pupil should be urged to try to state an answer. Explicit approval of not doing so should be given by the teacher's saying: "We selected one most of you want. If anybody can't think of a situation on the theme of the question which applies to him, he should not try to figure one out. There will be enough to start working on anyway."

*After each question, add the second question which appears in the first item.*

1. What situations are there in which you think you don't now know how to deal with what happens and in which you wish things would happen differently? *When does this kind of situation come up and who is in it with you?*
2. In what situations do you find someone doesn't understand you as well as you would like?
3. In what situations do you find someone understands you very well, just as much as you would like?

4. In what situations do you find it hard to decide what to do or to make up your mind what to do or say—seem not able to express yourself?
5. In what situations do you go right ahead and have no difficulty making up your mind what to do or say?
6. What situations come up which make you angry or very much annoyed?
7. What situations come up in which someone gets very annoyed or angry at you?
8. What situations happen to you which make you very happy?
9. What situations happen to you which make you very sad?

*The wording of each question should be varied to fit the age level of the group members and their circumstances.*

It is to be noted that it is just as important to get *positive* inter-personal events as *negative* ones for sociodramatic study. Impress students with the necessity of being *specific*.

The data given by pupils can then be analyzed by the teacher. For this purpose, the following schedule offers suggestions.

#### SOCIODRAMA ROLE ANALYSIS SCHEDULE

1. What problems do most pupils face?
2. What roles do most pupils feel they already deal with adequately?
3. What roles are they most in conflict with?
4. In what role-relationship to them are the people who they feel understand them least? most?
5. What official roles do most pupils now carry? (*e.g.*, part-time employee).
6. What unofficial roles do most pupils carry? ("father" of the family, chief bread-winner, etc.)
7. What future roles do they desire?

#### The Warming-Up Process

A role cannot be carried successfully (*i.e.*, in a manner convincing to the subject himself and the group members watching him) unless the individual is emotionally involved. The test of a director is the capacity of the player to carry the role he is undertaking—not some other role. Whatever methods the teacher uses are adequate if they *support the player* in his desire to portray the role in question. Thus, the methods for insuring a warming up sufficient to the player's needs for the portrayal will differ from one teacher to another.

In one case, the teacher while directing sociodrama may give little verbal instruction; in another, much verbal instruction. In tempo of instruction, teachers also will vary. Some will "ease" the subject into a role. Others

will help him precipitate himself, as it were, into the role. Still others may use both "styles" of directing, according to the subject they are trying to aid.

The particular style of a director on a given occasion may depend largely upon the rapport between him and the players. In turn, their receptivity to his warming-up procedure will depend upon their confidence in him. Both factors will affect any subject's performance as well as his initial willingness to portray the role or his familiarity with it.

It is usually helpful, in directing, to assist the subject to place himself in time and space and establish (begin to feel) the "mood" of the role before he actually enters the sociodrama. An example follows:

TEACHER: Exactly where are you?

STUDENT: Down the street.

TEACHER: Down *what* street?

STUDENT: Near the Sphinx Paper Factory, I'm just going—

TEACHER: What time of day is it?

STUDENT: It's not day, it's midnight—kind of windy—

TEACHER: What are you wearing?

STUDENT: My mackinaw, pulled up—it's so cold I can scarcely see—  
(hunches himself, acts hurried).

TEACHER: Go ahead!

Children and older students rapidly learn to become "directors" themselves and this is often a highly important experience for them.<sup>7</sup> In such cases, the teacher has only to say to the child who is "setting the stage" for sociodrama: "Tell your players where they are, the time, and enough about your situation so they can enter it with you. And give each of them a few seconds to *feel* the part he is taking."

### Minority Group Problems

Any survey of student problems, whether among minority group members or not, should be designed in such a manner that *only* those problems will be mentioned which the group members wish to reveal and of which they are keenly aware. This is especially important when the student group consists of minority group members living under segregated conditions. Otherwise, such students may possibly try to show that they are "well-informed." Even if it does not produce such a motivation, the wording of the question itself may focus their attention and, in consequence, it

<sup>7</sup> Occasionally there are teachers who prefer not to direct themselves and who are eminently successful in teaching the process to pupils. An observer may learn much about any pupil from his manner of directing, as well as from his performance in roles, and it is desirable to encourage children to direct.

cannot be determined what they would have replied, had no problem-area been suggested.

When a "neutral" question (i.e., one which carries no definition of content) is used, the problems it elicits will be nonetheless revealing. For example, in a segregated high school for Negroes, following discussions in senior speech classes on the topic, "What is the purpose of speech?" the survey shows that students consider their greatest difficulties in communication are with these people: white people; people in authority over students; strangers; newly met persons. The persons almost exclusively mentioned as presenting no difficulty are "my friends." Occasionally, students mention being at ease in a discussion in which all members of the class are allowed to take part, as "in my American Problems class." A special interest sometimes appears to increase the student's confidence in communicating: "I have no difficulty when trying to encourage fellows I know who are not in school to take up a trade . . . to learn something that no one could take away from them. In discussing their problems, I try to become interested in them as well as to speak as logically as possible."

It is particularly to be noted that where ease of communication is described, the individuals involved are already known to the student and are almost exclusively in his peer groups—"common everyday school friends." Sociodramatic exploration of sensitive inter-personal problems should in such an instance begin with those roles which the minority students not only are willing to explore but which they are apt to be readier to analyze. In the list of roles which are difficult for them, it is desirable to select those roles which are, *under any circumstances*, more "distant" psychologically; in the case of these students, salespersons, bus drivers, and others in community roles which are less able to deliver "hurt" than those in other roles. Roles requiring a greater amount of social interchange should be avoided in the beginning of sociodramatic training when the feeling with which they are charged is apparently intense.

I'd rather not come in contact with them (white people); they try to make me feel inferior.

I hate these salesgirls downtown. They wait on everyone else and let you stand there.

The sequence of situations used should proceed gradually and consistently until the majority of the class members reach a stage of some insight into the white person's role, before roles of greater difficulty are assumed (such as potential employers who are white).

For example, in the role of "white" salesperson, the Negro student finds he has such reactions as these:

When I was the white salesperson I felt I could not please my employer and that Negro person who wanted to buy from me because I

would lose my job if I please her and I felt bad because I had to displease her. I think they are bad off. I felt very sorry for myself. I knew she would blame me and I felt I was not brave or I would help her but I could not all the same.

I found I did not feel anything at all because I did not look at her. In that way I felt all right. I can't see how you can do selling and not be that way.

After becoming emotionally acquainted with the role the white person is often obliged to carry, the Negro student frequently shows more objectivity in his assessments of the individual white person.

At each stage in a sequence of situations, graduated in role-difficulty, it is essential to hold sessions first on *how we are dealing with the situation*, in order that the students can familiarize themselves with their present range of behaviors and assess its effectiveness. This procedure is also necessary to disclose how the "other" in the situation behaves and to build an accumulated group experience.

In the case of employers, as presented by the students, it is found that they may simply say: "The job is filled." Or, "We are not taking on a new worker just today." Or more directly, "We are not hiring colored girls or boys for the job." Or quite frankly, "These jobs are for white people only."

In the case of the student, sociodramatic portrayals likewise reveal a meager repertoire of behavior: displaying temper; giving confused remarks; taking the potential employer to task; and backing out of the situation, timidly apologizing for applying for the job.<sup>8</sup>

Through the sociodramatic learning process, students evaluate against the criterion of their own feelings while embodying the role of "white" employer, what outcomes were, and what outcomes would more nearly be, those they would want to produce in the reactions of persons in the role of white employers generally.

It should make him (the "white" employer) in the mood to be sorry he can't hire the Negro applicant.

It should make him feel he wants to make an effort in your behalf by creating an opening—even if it's in the basement, say, of the department store.

It should make him respect you and wish the world wasn't segregated, make him realize it's his loss as well as yours.

It should make him feel a little uneasy about whether it's a Christian thing to discriminate against a person who has made the effort to get

<sup>8</sup> It is of interest that the very students who are "best" students from an academic standpoint are often least able to manage their feelings so as to come closer to their objectives when confronted with prejudiced situations.



educated for the job and doesn't get it on account of his color, so he'll be on your side when he's at any policy-making meeting.

Even if you don't get any immediate, practical result, it should be certain to make him feel you're a human being and deserve respect and consideration—not to be answered that way, so off-handedly.

It should never run the risk of ruining another Negro's chance of employment.

You shouldn't have to think afterwards, "Well, I snuck out, I got so floored by his statement," and be ashamed, and neither should you lose all sense on the spot in your anger and have him truthfully say, "In his case, that fellow doesn't have much judgment; guess I wouldn't have employed him anyway if he wasn't Negro."

The sessions continue for the development of such skills as the students judge to be essential to implement their objectives. Ways of behaving which they consider effective are worked out.

I understand your situation. Then of course you can't employ me. But would you be so good as to give me your advice? As you know, I'm a graduate of \_\_\_\_\_ High School and I majored in \_\_\_\_\_. May I ask, where do you suggest I apply for a job along my line of training?

Yes, I did hear that that is the policy of this concern and I know it is hard to break tradition in a segregated city, particularly because it has a long history. But even if you think the white people would object to my being around, would you be willing to let me take the job for a few weeks to see how they react to me and then I'd be perfectly willing to leave if I make anybody unhappy?

Will you think it over, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. If you haven't had any chance to see how a Negro person would do the job, I can't expect you to decide right off.

Any situations which hold a destructive emotional impact for most members of a given minority group require classroom exploration to desensitize the individuals toward that experience, as much as to foster their cultivation of skills with which to face it.

This task in mental hygiene appears even more important when students apparently are reluctant to seek help from home. Such students are often so considerate of parents that they do not bring their feelings to them in order to spare them from possible "disillusionment."<sup>9</sup>

You should tell them nothing about it.

That's right. My father thinks the world is getting better and better than when he was a boy. I know it's not.

<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, such students on occasion select as their theme for Commencement the sociodramatic presentation of employment situations, using classmates to evaluate the situations, and show the former methods they had used, and the newly learned ones.

It's less bad for your father and mother if they think it's your fault.  
Yes, so they can still hope—dress you up more or improve your English.  
I told my folks once, and they got so down-hearted it took all my time trying to cheer them up.  
Anyway, their lives are half passed and it's us who got to fix up things.  
First thing is—don't be a sob-sister on older people, it does no good and you feel bad to do it.

It is notable that the psychological distance which is created through such sentiments is spread to other areas of living. When community pressures upon the adolescent are critical and he does not make use of an intimate adult source of communication even when it is available to him, it is found that he also has great problems communicating with people generally in situations outside his own home.

The following examples are in response to the question: "What situations come up where you find it difficult to know what to do or say? Where does the situation take place and who is in it with you?"

One incident when I had a bad time expressing myself was when I was asked by a white woman why I go to school and if I have hated school ever since I started in the kindergarten. I was at a loss for words for I really don't know why I don't or have never liked school. I told her I went as my parents want to be proud of me. I want to go farther in school than my parents did and be able to get the kind of job I want and can be proud of. She also asked me why did I want a good position when I got out into the world. I knew what I wanted to say but didn't know how to express myself; it stayed welled-up in me for I couldn't make her understand how I felt.

At a corner store where my mother trades the grocer knows us. One day I went into the store to get a loaf of bread. . . . The owner started talking about Truman's Civil Rights program. I knew a little about it, but I just wasn't able to express my point of view. Then he started talking to some of the other people and every now and then he would say something to me. I felt very bad because he knew I am graduating in June from high and I was not able to express myself. I was afraid I wouldn't say the right thing or make an error in my grammar. I was relieved when he rang up my groceries and I left.

. . . (on a train) I asked one of the porters if there was a bus terminal nearby and he replied there were none and asked me if I were lost. . . . I could not explain to the porter why I wanted to take the bus. Probably if I had, I would have saved many days of train riding.

I had difficulty when mother told me to pay the rent and tell the man about the repairs that were needed. I was walking around through the house repeating what she had told me to tell him and putting in my own bright ideas. When the rent man came I gave him the rent, tried to tell him about the repairs that were needed but I was speechless until after he left. I could have kicked myself because the bathroom still needs the repairing job done.

I remember once when I went to a new place to pay my neighbor's bill; at first I was lost and scared. When I did locate the place I was so bashful and tongue-tied I couldn't say my name when the floor man asked it. Finally I whispered my name. When it was time for them to wait on me, I couldn't say what I wanted. I had to write it down on a piece of paper. When I received my slip I ran out of the store and began crying. For what I don't know.

### The Social Laboratory

The social laboratory conditions for sociodramatic learning which any classroom presents have the great advantage that children know what they do and say is not "for keeps" as it is on the street, on the playground, or at home. Only in this laboratory setting can the child receive such training without at the same time receiving the hurts that real life situations may involve. In this setting, the immediate world consists of other learners like the learner in question who share with him the process of exploration, practice, discussion, and analysis, and who are not a judgmental audience.

Before the development of sociodrama, the teacher frequently had no way of knowing that by far the largest part of the child's experience which is of significance to him was being kept back from expression and review in the classroom—as a sort of side-river accompanying, but not legitimately connected with, the child's life and learning within school. At the children's disposal were no methods which would enable them to present their world in the classroom. As the teacher employs sociodramatic technique, she aids the least articulate child to show the life of the community as a whole as it touches him, and so he can see it, not alone, but with the many others who are his classmates.

In any classroom, when pupils are about to study a topic for which there is need of emotional comprehension of the problems involved, sociodrama can be useful in the teaching process. Through sociodrama, the pupils can be given opportunity to establish psychological connections between their own experience and the content-area to be studied, thus augmenting their motivation and interest in it. An important by-product of the process is the accumulation of pertinent information which may extend the teacher's knowledge of pupils and improve the relationship between pupils and teacher by lessening the gaps in cultural comprehension between them.

The illustration which follows is from an elementary class of fifth-grade children who are about to embark on a new unit concerned with migrations of people to America. It shows, through excerpts of the classroom procedure, how the teacher warms up the group to the undertaking ahead, shows acceptance on her part of the feelings and thoughts being expressed, and makes certain at the start that the class members who have least expe-

rience with the theme are recognized as important and integrated into the evolving plans.

Teacher calls the group's attention to next unit in social studies which deals with migrations of people to America and tells them that migration, in effect, generally means going a long distance, usually from one country to another.

Group finds most of members had not done that, but most had moved many times, half of them three or more times.

TEACHER: Some people in our class haven't had a chance to know personally how it feels to move. Perhaps it would help them to get the feeling if some of us tell how it feels to move to a new place.

PUPILS:

Sorry to leave my friends.

I knew everything about my old house—where the lights were—I could even go up and down the steps in the dark. The new house seemed strange.

In the new school they do things stranger than the old school.

I miss the good old times.

When you move to a new house, mostly all the boys want to fight you. If you beat them, they want to be friends.

TEACHER: And if you don't beat them?

PUPILS:

They keep on picking on you.

They call you chicken or sissy.

If you have a bigger brother, they don't try to start a fight.

Yeah, if you have someone bigger to take up for you, they leave you alone.

Sometimes you like to trade things like comic books with new kids.

TEACHER: What are you hoping for most when you move?

CLASS: To make new friends.

TEACHER: Are there any other problems it might help us to show in sociodramas?

Class agrees on theme, "How it is when a new person or a new family moves into our neighborhood or our city."

TEACHER: Who can give us a situation you know about in a very few words?

PUPILS:

Foreign child comes into our country, whole lot of American children don't want to make friends with him.

Japanese come, don't fight them, try to make friends.

Foreign families move into neighborhood. Boys and girls have a club, don't want the foreigners in it because some of their dads were killed over there.

Some family already here, go to New York, trains go over buildings—little children frightened.

Country person moving to city, likely to brag about place he came from—keeps thinking the air was cleaner, fresh vegetables, people more friendly. However, finds it as good as country.

English boy, boys want to play ball with him—he says he must go home for tea—make fun.

Man opens store—gets acquainted with all the people who come in. Some boys didn't like him, called him "An old bag," started to steal apples and stuff from him—maybe he can't count as well and they say *he* is stealing from them.

Say in the housing shortage, some family is living in a garage, the children make fun.

With the new man who opens the store, the children could throw things like rotten eggs and tomatoes.

They could say he was cheating, because he doesn't know how to count the American way—then he meets someone he knew in the other country, he helps him to learn to count. The children find out he was a toymaker in the other country—he helps them fix their toys.

TEACHER: Louise gave us an "out" for the man. (Teacher shows she recognizes the situation as fictional, does not display disapproval, but tries to discover whether basic situation is genuinely a common experience.) Our sociodramas are for things that really happen. Does it really happen, or have you seen it just in movies?

PUPILS:

Over where my brother lives they do it. On the hill.

Or someone could plant a garden, boys come along—pulled it up and threw everything around.

TEACHER: Did this really happen?

PUPILS:

Yes, down near the river.

TEACHER: Did the boys have a grudge against the person who planted the garden or did they do it just for something to do?

PUPILS:

Just for fun.

Say like a peddler stopping to see a house if they have any old rags and stuff. While he's in, the kids throw his stuff all over the street.

TEACHER: Did this really happen?

PUPILS:

Yes, down our street.

Some kids loosen the wheel on the wagon—when he goes, it falls off. When he tells them to bring his stuff back, they laugh and call him names.

TEACHER: Do they do these things to others or just the junk man?

PUPIL: Just the junk man.

TEACHER: I wonder why.

PUPIL: Because he's old and they know he can't run and chase them.

CLASS DISCUSSION: SOCIODRAMA ON STOREKEEPER'S SITUATION.

Situation directed by children; Place: inside store.

ONE CHILD: Give me a package of noodles.

SECOND CHILD: How much are these candy bars?

STOREKEEPER: Six cents.

SECOND CHILD: I can get them cheaper in the store down street.

THIRD CHILD: I want a quart of milk.

STOREKEEPER: Here's your milk and your change.

THIRD CHILD: How much is milk? You *cheat*.

STOREKEEPER: Twenty-one cents.

CHILDREN: You cheat—we'll go to another store. (Rush out.)

(A friend who knew storekeeper in the other country enters.)

FRIEND: (seeing storekeeper with head in hand) What's the matter, pal?

STOREKEEPER: People no buy from me.

FRIEND: Why?

STOREKEEPER: They don't like me. They always call me old man. And I am not old!

FRIEND: I think the trouble is you don't learn to count much. How many quarters are in a dollar?

STOREKEEPER: Two.

FRIEND: That is wrong. There are four quarters in a dollar. How many quarters in 75 cents?

STOREKEEPER: Three.

FRIEND: (patting him on back) That is right! You are learning!

(Children re-enter.)

ONE CHILD: Look, he charges six cents for these candy bars! (All grab things, as they go.)

FRIEND: We must do something about this!

STOREKEEPER: Call the cops.

FRIEND: That is bad.

STOREKEEPER: Hide behind the curtain when they come in again. I'll do the rest.

(Two children re-enter, with Mother who is saying to herself the things she wanted to buy.)

STOREKEEPER: Are these your children?

MOTHER: Yes, of course.

STOREKEEPER: They stole some things from my store.

MOTHER: I can't believe my children would do such things!

FRIEND: That one took a banana.

MOTHER: How can that be—we have three dozen at home.

(Accusations continue; children deny.)

MOTHER: I don't believe the man would say you stole if you didn't.

FRIEND: What you need is a good, old-fashioned spanking.

MOTHER: I'm willing to pay for the things. What all did they take? What does it all come to?

STOREKEEPER: (to friend) How much would it be?

FRIEND: \$10.50.

MOTHER: Just for those few things?

STOREKEEPER: Ceiling prices.

MOTHER: By the way, where did you come from?

STOREKEEPER: Italy.

MOTHER: How nice! What kind of job did you have there?

STOREKEEPER: I was a toymaker.

FRIEND: We were in business together there.

MOTHER: How much would you want to fix a little doll for my girl?

STOREKEEPER: We fix for nothing. You a friend, you my first American friend.

(Children run out to get toys.)

MOTHER: I think I shall find the other children who were doing the stealing.

(All re-enter, some with toys.)

MOTHER: To make up for what they did, I think all the children should do something for you.

CHILDREN: Oh sure (but turn as if to leave).



STOREKEEPER: Sure, you could sweep the floor.

CHILD: Can I do anything? (Expecting him to say no, starts to leave.)

FRIEND: Wait a minute! You can wash the window.

(End of performance.)

#### DISCUSSION

PUPIL: I think there should be more boys for that stealing part because girls don't steal as much as boys.

BOY (who was in role of friend): I don't think that's true. I saw two girls steal apples down at our store.

PUPIL: I think they're tomboys.

LOUISE (who had role of Mother): Two reasons I picked girls—if there are no girls who steal, why do they have special women's penitentiary? Also, I don't think *our* boys could put as much into it as these girls. (She may mean they wouldn't try to.)

PUPILS:

I think they all did well. Roderick (storekeeper) said 21¢ for milk and that's what it is. He was making it so real, you'd think it was a real store.

When he said candy bars are 6¢—they are.

They were probably trying to get him to give them to them for less.

BOY (who had role of friend): Roderick should have had more of an accent.

PUPILS:

Sometimes Roderick talked like an Italian, sometimes like he was supposed to.

He sounded just like Mr. Romano who has a store down by our place.

LOUISE: I want to compliment the people who went up, because I just told them who they were to be.

I liked the comedy. I wished there had been more.

TEACHER (entering discussion for the first time): What part did you consider comedy?

PUPILS:

When they were saying how many quarters in a dollar.

I thought it was comic when Roderick said, "Ceiling prices."

I think if it had been \$10.20 the mother would have wondered how much they stole.

TEACHER: Yes, I thought that part was a little unbelievable. How did you think the mother did?

PUPIL: She acted just like a real mother.

BOY (who had role of friend): She handled the solution of *paying* the storekeeper.

Quite aside from the constellations of cultural roles with which the children show varying degrees of familiarity in any sociodrama, there are given numerous clues to the personal value system of the individual child and his capacity to implement this system. For example, in the above illustration there can be noted the "fair-to-everyone" attitudes implied in Louise's portrayal of the mother, her defense of the storekeeper and recognition that paying him back in money would not "cover" the offense to his feelings. Also, she graciously praises the other players as a group and belittles her own role in directing the sociodrama—"I just told them who they were to be." It becomes clearer why Louise could not help but think up a fictional ending, an "out," for such a situation. Or, in the case of the boy who was the storekeeper's friend, there can be noted the determination not to let the stealing children get away with things—his over-charging the mother for what they had taken and calling them back to wash windows when the storekeeper had settled only on the task of sweeping the floor.

In addition, and perhaps more important, it is possible to study many sociodramas of the same group of children and discover with great specificity what they show in common which may be of significance for their mental health. For example, in the illustration, the children as a group show: general willingness to accept and offer criticism in a frank and forthright fashion; and signs of being in close touch with the practicalities of life (such as the price of milk), but perhaps "hemmed in" by them—praise is given for being, as it were, precisely like life. In such study, whatever children do *not* express becomes as important as what is expressed.

For such a purpose, the discussion stage of a sociodrama can be highly valuable. The sociodrama provides a *common frame of reference* within which the children can react. Since it presents a problem significant in their lives to which group members can relate themselves, identification with what they are witnessing is possible to some extent for all children. It is this which makes a usual occurrence valuable and pertinent interaction among group members. Through the suitability of the educational tool, there is *more to be exchanged*. Yet this explanation by itself is insufficient.

The enthusiasm and the zest which children at all developmental levels show and the earnestness, particularly among minority group children (in whom are buried so many wanted roles that society is withholding from them), reflect not alone the greater efficacy of sociodramatic technique for expanding the child's vision of himself and implementing his discoveries

with concrete skills—but the much more important psychological fact: namely, that for the child, the concept of self is *in the making*.<sup>10</sup> In the midst of the developmental process where he is, it is as if the child recognizes a method which aids him in his effort to create the self according to his own prescription worked out explicitly in interaction with others. The culture and its conflicting roles become a terrain over which it is possible to gain a review again and again and still again, as wanted. To the child, perhaps more than to the adult, there is appeal and fascination in voluntary exertion to protect and cultivate spontaneity in perception and in action.

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<sup>10</sup> See Jennings, Helen H., *Leadership and Isolation*. New York: Longmans, Green and Co. Second edition, 1950.

See in this connection findings on the child's psychology of choice and the psychological staircase phenomenon, Chapter Thirteen, "Sociometric Grouping in Relation to Child Development." The inter-personal structure of the classroom group, made visible in the sociogram, becomes many times more meaningful to the group leader, the teacher, as the children's role relationships become articulated. Moreover, every child becomes freer to choose in directions from which he may have been formerly cut off through retardation in his role comprehensions or through the meagerness of his own role-range. Thus sociodramatic work and sociometric grouping can be seen within the framework of one educational process which has the same objective: aiding the individual to preserve and increase his capacity for inter-personal rapport by releasing him from the limitations of his own cultural role context.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

# Understanding Group Processes

HENRY S. MAAS

THE study of group processes within the classroom is attracting the interest of teachers, school administrators, mental hygienists, and research workers. For some, it offers a new way of understanding pupils. For others, it suggests a somewhat different way of doing things in the classroom. To the administrator, it becomes apparent that classroom procedures are not likely to be modified unless certain changes are made in administration and supervision. The mental hygienist, who is concerned with constructive and satisfying social relations in the early years of life, looks hopefully to the school where the child has his first organized and extra-family group experiences. To the research worker, inter-personal relations among pupils and teachers present a field with many unsolved problems, problems subsumed under the single question: What are the effects of these relationships upon learning and development?

When we consider how recently we have learned the little we know about the processes of group life, this widespread interest on the part of educators is remarkable. The purpose of this chapter is to review and apply to school situations some of the knowledge about small groups that has meaning for mental hygiene practice in the classroom.

Borrowing from the language of social psychologists, some teachers are beginning to talk of the "interactions," "atmosphere," and "cohesiveness" of their classes. Some teachers are saying, "I am going to make a good group out of my class." One must first be sure that the new technical vocabulary does not antedate, or become a substitute for, a clear understanding of the new concepts and their application.

### What Is a Group?

Definitions vary among writers in the field, but there is basic agreement that a group is more than an assembly of individuals. Students who gather to hear a lecture do not compose a group. They may congregate on repeated occasions, yet during the lecture periods there is no observable



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*The attitudes of the leader influence the personal relationships among members of the group.*

development or change in their relationships. They are not likely to modify their ways of thinking or behaving merely by virtue of their common presence in the lecture hall. Their behavior there is carried over from similar situations elsewhere, and it is likely to be the same at the fifth session as it was at the first.

By contrast, in a developing group there are *slowly changing networks of relationships* among the members; there are *mores or customs* that grow up as the needs of the group and its members become apparent; and there is a history of *developmental phases* through which the group proceeds. Let us look separately at each of these three aspects of a group, keeping in mind our own classrooms.

### Changing Networks of Relationships

After its early meetings, when relationships are likely to change rapidly, a group is marked by slowly changing networks of relationships. For relationships to develop and change, there must be communication among the individuals involved. While two students at a lecture may exchange "looks"—and these are certainly a form of communication—our most common way of communicating with one another is through words. Largely through verbal exchange, the members of a group become known to each other and take on significance for one another. After a while each member

becomes identified as having certain attitudes, feelings, motives, knowledge, and skills. His presence affects the behavior of the others in various ways.

One writer, John Walker Powell, from his experience with adult education groups, goes so far as to say, "No member can 'miss' the meeting that would have taken place if he had come."<sup>1</sup> This is one way of saying that any meeting of a group is influenced by the presence or absence of each of its members. Had an absent member been present, the meeting would have been different—it would not have been the meeting he missed.

Think of Joe March on the school bus every morning. He whirls paper airplanes from the back seat, or starts the game of tossing girls' books down the aisle. One day he is home in bed with a cold. Mike, Joe's first lieutenant, now sits soberly alone on the back seat; Lulu does not cling quite so closely to Mary Ann; and Hank, the driver, seems surprisingly jovial.

It is clear that inter-personal *behavior* has been modified by the absence of an individual. If Joe March should move to another community, inter-personal *relationships* on the school bus may become modified.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps Lulu's need for Mary Ann will diminish; perhaps the group will no longer reject Mike.

In any on-going group, the relationships among members are slowly modified by a sort of chain reaction which is set off when an old member drops out, when a new member is added, or when a similar event occurs.

The word "networks" is appropriately used in the plural. There may be many cliques or sub-groups within a larger group. One person may have two or more sets of relationships in separate, although interrelated, networks. The relationships which exist when the group is at "work" may be quite different from those when the group is at "play."<sup>3</sup>

A study of kindergarten children reveals that positions of dominance in the group are maintained only temporarily. There is variation according to the situation, according to the child's partner, and according to the activity the group is engaged in.<sup>4</sup>

To go back to our school bus, Mike may show very different behavior from one time to another. When Joe March is present and has started things, Mike feels relatively free to toss books and papers around. Joe establishes a pattern which he can follow. But let us assume a test is coming up, and Mike feels he must do some

<sup>1</sup> Powell, John W. "The Dynamics of Group Formation." *Psychiatry* 11:117-24; May 1948.

<sup>2</sup> Inter-personal *relationships* may be considered the more consistent patterns of inter-personal *behavior*, except that in defining "relationships" we always include the feelings of the persons involved.

<sup>3</sup> Jennings calls these simultaneous structures "sociogroups" and "psychogroups." Jennings, Helen. H. *Sociometry of Leadership*. Monograph No. 14. New York: Beacon House, 1947.

<sup>4</sup> Hanfmann, Eugenia. "Social Structure of a Group of Kindergarten Children." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 5:407-10; October 1935.

cramming for it. Today he looks to Gary for help and turns his back upon a somewhat deflated Joe. This morning the people who "rate" are a different set. And that same afternoon, after the quiz is over, there may be the usual throwing of things—Joe is back at the top in one network of relationships, and Gary is back in his lower station.

### Attitudes of the Group Leader

The inter-personal relationships between members of any group are influenced to a marked degree by the attitudes of the group leader. The studies of Lewin, Lippitt, and White, which constitute basic research in the area of group dynamics, have direct application to the schoolroom.<sup>5</sup> These studies were made with small groups of boys in the intermediate grades who were organized into clubs, and who were given various types of adult leaders in an attempt to vary the "social climate" in the groups. The leader who was "authoritarian" told members specifically what to do in each step of their work; the leader who was "democratic" acted more as a discussion leader and technical adviser, helping the group to make decisions from alternate choices; the leader who was "laissez-faire" participated minimally, giving little guidance and generally allowing the boys to manage as best they could.

Under the authoritarian leader, members seek approval from the leader rather than from one another; there is marked rivalry for the leader's attention. When all rewards and punishments come from one omnipotent source, only the relationships with that person become important. Other members in the group are looked upon as being in the way, or as competitors, or as persons to whom one hopes punishment will be diverted. Under such leadership, member-member relationships are not likely to be constructive.

In the classroom a pupil who waves his hand frantically toward the teacher in the hope of being called on sees other pupils as rivals and sees the teacher as the sole donor of rewards. Here the personality of the child leads him to act as though he were in an authoritarian situation, whether or not this is true of his school situation. Study of his family relationships may tell us why he behaves this way. Because his underlying anger may almost never be expressed directly to the leader, a reprimand to a classmate may be his cue for treating that classmate as a scapegoat.

An autocratic leader makes many, though not all, members fearful or angry. Since he may seem too powerful to rebel against, members of the group get relief for their pent-up feelings by attacking another member

<sup>5</sup> Lippitt, R., and White, R. K. "The 'Social Climate' of Children's Groups." *Child Behavior and Development*. Edited by R. G. Barker, J. S. Kounin, and H. F. Wright. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1943.



of the group. The autocratic leader fosters attacks on scapegoats and thus keeps tensions in the group directed away from himself.

Under a "democratic" leader, activity and responsibility are shared among the members. The leader behaves not like the Omnipotent One, but like one of the members of the group, though one who has special skills and knowledge. Failure as well as success is shared, and another's rewards are one's own. The leader's accepting attitude toward members fosters their respect for one another. They show a healthy balance between mutual dependence and independence.

A leader may, as in Lewin's "laissez-faire" situation, be too permissive. In such a group the child feels that anything goes; nothing is definite. The leader seems indifferent to the members and what they do. Members feel a strong need for leadership, and they may seek an autocrat. There may be rivalry among them to organize the situation in some fashion or other. In many ways, members show their dissatisfaction with the anarchic situation.

#### Admitting a New Member to the Group

Actually, any change in the membership or leadership, or any change within any member, may effect changes in the inter-personal relationships of a group. We have described briefly the possible changes in member-member relationships when one member leaves the group, and we have discussed changes which accompany various types of leader attitude. There is space here to discuss only one other type of change, the introduction of a new member.

Susan Isaacs reports in her observations of young children that any newcomer must earn his way into the group by "affability, confidence, and courage."<sup>6</sup> With adults in group psychotherapy, it has been found that the new member almost always seems to arouse in old members "the threat of the stranger."

Whether or not a newcomer will ever "belong" to the group depends on many factors in addition to the personal attributes of that new member: developmental stage of the group; the extent to which old members feel secure in their relationships with one another and with the leader; and the mores that have developed in the group relative to how one handles new members.

For example, a child who has just moved into the neighborhood enters the classroom. Miss Jackson, who appreciates the importance of group relations, knows the strange child needs some special support. She puts an understanding arm around the child's shoulder, and

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<sup>6</sup> Isaacs, Susan. *Social Development in Young Children*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1933.

ushers her over to a sub-group headed by Mabel. Mabel, though expansive, is the dominating-mother type. "Mabel, won't you take care of Laura and show her around, where to put her coat and keep her papers, and so on?" asks the teacher.

Little may Miss Jackson notice Barbara, Mabel's "favorite child," who sulks away while Mabel protects the new Laura for the rest of the morning. Miss Jackson may wonder why Barbara irritably reports to her at recess that the new girl tripped her on the stairs. The group phenomenon of hostility to the newcomer, manifested by others in the classroom and aggravated by Barbara's personal needs, might make first days in school very difficult for Laura.<sup>7</sup>

### A Group Has Mores or Customs of Its Own

One writer distinguishes between "codes"—homogeneous sets of values which are implicit or explicit; and "controls"—processes which force conformity upon group members.<sup>8</sup>

The term mores, as it is used here, includes both codes and controls. Mores include some patterns of behavior and attitudes that are known to be *approved* by the members; other patterns that are merely *tolerated* or permitted; and others that are definitely *taboo*.

Some members find it difficult to function in a group situation until there is a clarification of procedural rules. If such rules are lacking, these persons will either withdraw from the group, or they will try to behave in accordance with customs they have learned in analogous situations. For instance, some members of a small seminar, identifying it as a class situation, will raise their hands before speaking. To take another example, some pupils coming to the music room from the more restrictive atmosphere of their official classroom will lack their normal spontaneity. They will join in group singing only shyly. They will wait until approved behavior in this new setting has been demonstrated and sanctioned by peers. The exhortations of the music teacher may have no effect.

Transitions of this sort for the individual group member, from the old world to the new, are not easily made. Mores, once they are relatively stabilized in a group, are quite difficult to change; and the processes whereby they can be changed in small groups are not entirely understood.

Merei, studying children's groups, observed the child who was frequently dominant in a larger class. When this child was introduced into a sub-

<sup>7</sup> Substantiation of the pressure under which newcomers live turns up everywhere. A medical officer, in his study of 500 psychoneurotics in the South Pacific in 1944, remarked in passing: "The majority were replacements in old well-organized units with long overseas service. These newcomers broke under minimal stress, with little or no combat or disease, and after only short periods of overseas duty." Fisher, Edison D. "Psychoneuroses in the Armed Forces." *Bulletin of the U. S. Army Medical Department* 7:939-47; November 1947.

<sup>8</sup> Deutschberger, Paul. "The Structure of Dominance." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 17:343-51; April 1947.

group that had been meeting together for some time and that had crystallized some of its own ways of doing things, he could not immediately modify the existing mores of the group.<sup>9</sup> In order to alter the customs so that he could take over, he first had to accept some of the customs members already had agreed upon. He had, that is, to ride along with them as things were. Only gradually could he peck away at their less important customs and make a first dent for himself. From then on, it was a matter of continued pecking away at the more firmly established mores.

Knowledge of this group phenomenon has value for the teacher. At many age levels, the mores of the peer group may be quite different from those which the teacher would like to see accepted by her pupils.<sup>10</sup> A teacher's attempts to impose her own standards will inevitably be met with resistance, unless she first understands the values held by her pupils. Yet no other individual in the class is potentially so powerful an inducer of mores as the teacher.

The sensitive teacher will therefore begin with pupils where they are. Pupils have been taught to read, for example, from comic books as well as from standard primers. Pupils in the first to the sixth grades have profited from an hour each day in which they were "allowed to do exactly as they pleased as long as they did not endanger themselves or others."<sup>11</sup> Some teachers might question this "sheer waste of time." Working hard and long is an essential value in the families from which many teachers come.

These differences between the teacher's and the pupils' mores may be wide and unbridgeable unless the teacher starts by observing and accepting many of the customs pupils bring to the classroom. Though this may sound like heresy to some teachers, it is not intended as a derogation of their values. Whether the teacher's values are good or bad is not the question. The problem is rather: What can we learn from the sciences and mental hygiene practice to help us effect the ends we all want to see achieved? The mores peculiar to any group of young people a teacher is trying to understand and help depend on the age and developmental level of the members, on their predominant ethnic and social groupings,<sup>12</sup> and on the unique experiences in the history of the group itself.

Let us see how one teacher applied her understanding of pupils' mores in remedying a classroom situation.

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<sup>9</sup> Merri, Ferenc. "Group Leadership and Institutionalization." *Human Relations* 2:23-39; January 1949.

<sup>10</sup> See Chapter Three for a discussion of peer groups.

<sup>11</sup> Fitzsimons, Marian J. "An Experiment in the Application of Mental Hygiene Principles to Classroom Procedure." Grosse Pointe, Michigan: Board of Education. Undated. (Mimeo.)

<sup>12</sup> See Chapter Two for a more detailed discussion of this point.

A well-intentioned seventh-grade teacher thought her class "needed some group experience." She proposed a club period, run by the pupils themselves, and this suggestion was well received. She then decided that an election should be held for chairman, vicechairman, and secretary—since a group, according to her standards, demanded these formal appurtenances.

Carefully, before the election, she defined the duties of the chairman—duties which were to be similar to her own activities when she taught the class herself. In response, the class elected to the chairmanship a girl who was a prototype of the teacher: well-informed, conscientious, and as rigid in dealing with herself as with others. Having elected this girl chairman, pupils then began to make things difficult for her.

The teacher had forgotten that her own ways of doing things were quite different from the ways her thirteen-year-old pupils did things. The students had strong negative feelings about the teacher's imposing her own procedures on what they had expected would be their own group. These feelings were promptly displaced upon her surrogate, the chairman. Since the rules for group life in this pseudo-democratic group were the teacher's, and since there was now a less threatening mistress in the chair, pupils could now express their otherwise covert feelings.

The teacher, understandably, was dismayed. She decided to try a new approach. She told her students that they could decide for themselves what procedures to use in club meetings. She suggested that, if they so desired, they could hold a second election.

The group grasped the suggestion. They spent several meetings discussing their procedures, and they elected a new chairman—one of quite different ilk from the first. Meetings now ran relatively smoothly—smoothly, at any rate, from the point of view of the group.

### A Group Passes Through Developmental Phases

Much might be said about how the teacher's attitude of acceptance comes to permeate the mores of the pupils; but to see this in perspective the developmental stages of a maturing group must be considered at least briefly.

At the early meetings of a new group, members are self-defensive. All are more or less strangers to each other. Each person reacts to each of the others as if he were a new member in an old group. Initial comments are addressed to the leader (teacher), for he is expected to set the tone and define the mores for the group. Initial security, it is thought, flows from him.

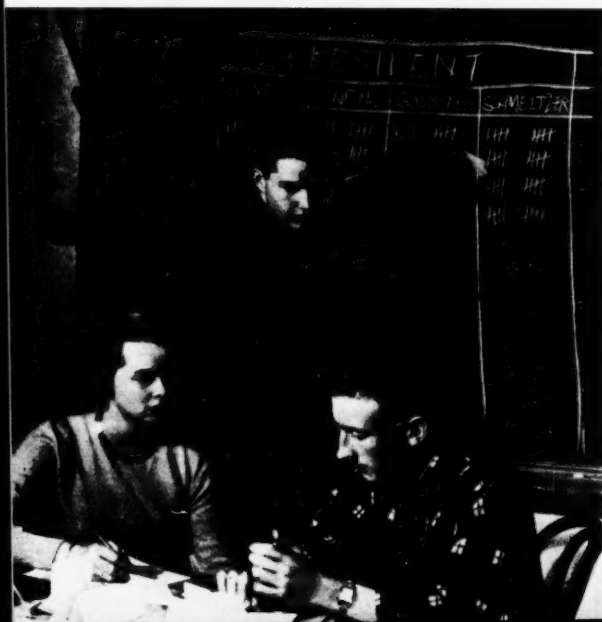
Members may ask themselves, "What is acceptable behavior here?" "Will I be able to fit in?" "How will I appear to the leader and to the others?" "Will I be able to do what is expected?"

Feelings and behavior will vary, certainly, according to the needs and motives of each individual. But most members will at first try to relate themselves to each other through the leader.

If all questions are answered by the leader, as though he alone were responsible for the success of the group, a pattern of dependency on the leader is established. Member-member relations are likely to become rivalrous, and one may note some early and subtly expressed negative feelings toward the leader. Members may ask questions and seek advice—although it is usually true that people do not really want answers, and that they usually cannot use advice, once it is given them.

The leader who, on the other hand, begins by deflecting questions back to the group for joint decision is not neglecting his responsibility; he is sharing it. And he is fostering good member-member relationships. He is implying that he is not all-powerful and all-knowing, and that he has respect for the opinions and desires of the members. With the latter procedure, members do not vie nearly so much with one another; nor are they so concerned with showing only their strengths. When the leader appears to be a fallible mortal who needs to consult with other members before a decision can be made, members feel freer to reveal their own imperfections. They do not *have* to be right. It is inevitable that there will be some persons who strive to establish themselves in dominant roles at early meetings. But when mores in the group are crystallized, as the

***The class decided it should hold an election.***



*Washington, D. C., Public Schools*

group develops—e.g., when “status-seeking” ceases to be tolerated and becomes taboo—members may feel greater comfort in more constructive and acceptable behavior.

If we look now at later developmental stages, we find that group relationships have been developed and are only slowly modified. The same is true of the mores of the group. In some groups, new members may now be more comfortably admitted. A new member can be more easily accepted by members who are themselves secure in their group relations. The leader is looked upon as a member with special skills and knowledge, and he contributes as he is needed. He has as much responsibility for the group's progress as any other member, and he is as free to act when he sees the need for it.

At this later stage, when problems arise, members will feel freer to raise questions and to express negative feelings when they are displeased about how things are going. They have less need to be defensive, for they feel the support of the leader and of the others.

The extent to which these developmental stages are applicable to a classroom or to sections of a classroom, and the extent to which they apply at various developmental levels in childhood and early adolescence, cannot here be demonstrated for lack of space. It is true, by and large, that at the primary level there will be smaller groups and more active leadership required. In the intermediate grades and junior high school the group may progressively approximate the total class, and leadership control will be expected to diminish. And while at no time, of course, can pupils afford to lose the emotional support and understanding of their teachers, it is also probably true that as teachers become more resource specialists and less class-directors and tellers-of-the-truth, both individual and group development at school will be sounder. Ideally then, in every class there will be enough of the spirit of group support (found in the latter stages of a democratic group) so that pupils will be able to express quite freely and to examine with teachers and fellow pupils some of their problems and dissatisfactions connected with growing up. This sort of activity in the classroom is possible and fruitful only when inter-personal relations in the class have moved beyond the first stages of group formation described above. That attitudes toward school and learning are generally better when pupils feel themselves responsible members of a maturing group is obvious.

### **Understanding the Child by Studying His Relationships in a Group**

The teacher may see repeated patterns in pupils' inter-personal behavior, even though class situations vary. The well-adjusted child is relatively



flexible.<sup>13</sup> At one time he can be the leader in a game; at another time he can participate comfortably when another child takes over the top role. It is the child who must *always* be the leader, or who must *always* be the shy follower, who bears further observation.

Mabel, who must always be "mamma" to the other girls, and who can never let another person play that role, is not as healthy as she might be. Watch the children whom Mabel seeks out; and watch the children like Barbara who seek out Mabel. What does Mabel expect or demand of others? And what does Barbara seem to need from Mabel? Is Mabel happy only when she is dominating others? And is Barbara happy only when she is being told what to do?

Does Bob ignore his classmates in his drive to please the teacher? Is the teacher the only one in the classroom who apparently matters to him? What goes on between Bob and the other children during recess, between classes, at lunch, or during a free period?

Is Sam continually seeking to communicate with others during formal learning periods? To what extent does he seem to need the continuous support of other children outside the classroom—on the stairs and in the corridors? Is Sam's talkativeness a reaction to having to sit still at his desk? Or is it a more all-pervading pattern?

The teacher can study the social situation in the classroom to help her understand her pupils.<sup>14</sup> From a series of objective observations she can derive hypotheses about the meanings of pupils' behavior in class. To get at these meanings, of course, the teacher must be aware of her own biases. If not, she may find herself approving or condemning, rather than understanding, what she sees.

It must be acknowledged that an understanding of group relationships will not be sufficient to understand the individual child. For example, Barbara's constant attachment to Mabel (and her later attachment to Peg, who is much like Mabel) gives us hunches about the meaning of her behavior. Barbara seems to feel that she is only a very little, very helpless girl; she feels she needs protection from others in the class; and she feels lost without being mothered. To get at the causes of this behavior, one has to study Barbara's individual record. Is Barbara's mother babying and over-protecting her? Or is there a new baby at home who Barbara feels has displaced her?

<sup>13</sup> By flexibility is *not* meant the chameleon-like behavior of children who never do what they really want to, but who in every situation seek to do just what will please those in authority.

<sup>14</sup> There are special techniques which the teacher may use which yield information about group relationships. See Chapter Twelve for a discussion of some of these techniques.



To return to Mike and Joe in the school bus, one senses that Mike feels he is bad when he whirls paper airplanes or throws books around. Joe is important to Mike; since Joe does the "bad" thing first, it removes the stigma from Mike's brow. But to determine why Mike feels the way he does demands an individual investigation, beginning with the relationships and attitudes in Mike's home. Thus the group approach cannot replace the individual approach to a thorough understanding of pupils; rather it complements it.

Understanding is usually a step which must precede doing. In interpersonal relations, however, this may not at all be true—understanding may actually be the highest form of doing. But in the case of Barbara, let us see what the teacher can *do*, beyond understanding the meaning of the child's behavior, and without going into the causes of that behavior.<sup>15</sup>

On the hypothesis that Barbara feels she is a helpless child, the teacher should watch for those tasks in which Barbara counts on Mabel's help. These are the tasks which Barbara may gradually be able to accomplish for herself, if at first she has the support of a partner less dominating than Mabel. The implication here is not that supportive relationships among pupils are to be broken up—far from it! But Mabel will never really help Barbara, because Mabel's own need is to keep Barbara a dependent and helpless child.

Growing up, as Dr. Frederick Allen sees it, is "a separating process" although not "an isolating process."<sup>16</sup> The objective is not for Barbara to be a completely independent child. Excessive independence may merely be one way of denying one's need for dependent relationships—and a tight collar is just as uncomfortable worn inside out as outside in. But the hope is that Barbara will in time feel free to be with Mabel or not to be with Mabel. Certainly she should not be so dependent as to fret at Mabel's temporary attentions to a new girl.

The teacher might also think twice before turning a new child over to Mabel. In doing so, she is playing into Mabel's consistent need to mother other children. At the beginning, Laura may need the kind of protection Mabel is sure to give her. But one question is whether Laura will later feel free enough to relate comfortably to others in the class.

<sup>15</sup> With justification, teachers often decry the over-individualized approach requested of them. Teachers are not case workers, but group workers. And with a class of thirty or forty children, they ought not to be expected to carry their pupils as a case load in addition to their group assignments.

Ideally, of course, there should be case workers and psychologists available for the referral of those children who need special and continuous help. But in many communities there are no specialists available; the teacher may have to fall back upon her own resources.

<sup>16</sup> Allen, Frederick H. *Psychotherapy with Children*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1942.

It is therefore essential to understand the pupil's behavior for what it is. Relationships may be growth-stunting as well as growth-stimulating. A relationship which cannot tolerate the direct expression of negative feelings, or which cannot tolerate the freedom of movement of those involved, is a growth-stunting relationship.

### Meeting Group Problems Through Understanding Group Processes

We have been discussing how the teacher can utilize her observations of group relationships to assist her in dealing with individual children. Let us ask now how she may utilize such information in meeting a group problem.

In a junior high school, pupils volunteered early in the year for assignments to the school traffic squad. As Christmas approached, pupil after pupil asked to be relieved from the squad. The teachers wondered why.

A review of the situation revealed that squad boys were required to report "delinquent" schoolmates. In this role, they became "out-groupers" to a sizable percentage of the school population. They were particularly unpopular with the more aggressive and outwardly defiant boys—those who at the junior-high age are the arbiters of fashion among their peers. None of this latter group was attracted to squad duty because this meant allying oneself with adult authority—behavior which is taboo at this period in development. Squad boys, on the other hand, were chiefly the second-run members of the school society.

In the administration of the traffic squad, there had been no group meetings. Members reported individually to the faculty adviser. There was never any opportunity consequently to develop group relations within the corps, nor any opportunity for squad boys to express their feelings as a group.

School rules were interpreted to the rest of the school at assembly meetings. The teachers described their regulations in terms of what they thought was best for the welfare of all pupils.

Squad boys thus seemed to become scapegoats for the other pupils' negative feelings toward authority. With no group membership of their own and with no outlet for their feelings, boys on the squad had no recourse but to resign from their duties.

The following are a few of the recommendations proposed to assist with this problem: Class delegates should meet to draw up an acceptable set of school rules. The faculty should act as resource people at these meetings, not as autocratic group leaders. Interpretation of the law should be made to the pupils by their peers. Student leaders might then be drawn into the process. Squad membership should become a scheduled rotating function among as large a segment of the school population as feasible. The attitude should be encouraged that patrol duty is a common responsibility of the school. Group meetings of squad members should permit them to air

their problems and their feelings. The feeling that "I alone am faced with disapproval from my classmates" may be dispelled within the squad as a group. Effort should also be made to interrelate the traffic squad members *as a group* with other clubs at the school. The squad should plan activities which can be carried out with members of other groups in the school.

It is certain that these recommendations are not panaceas. Workable formulae vary from school to school and always need modification according to the individuals involved. This multiple attack is presented simply as a demonstration of a use of the group approach to a school problem in inter-personal relations.<sup>17</sup>

### Summary

We have discussed the three main criteria by which a group may be distinguished from an assembly of individuals, and we have shown how an understanding of group processes can aid the teacher in dealing with individual and with group problems. We have by-passed the moot question of whether or not an assembly of individuals must have a common goal in order to be a group.

Perhaps we have not dealt sufficiently with the question of whether or not a typical classroom is, or can be, a group in the way "group" has been defined in this chapter. To the extent that a class, or a section of it, evidences slowly changing networks of relationships through give-and-take communication, to the extent that it develops mores of its own, and to the extent that it shows a history of developmental phases such as have been described, it approximates group life.

It must be clear, too, that the teacher cannot "make" a good group, even though she can go far toward doing so if she sets up attitudes which are accepting and truly democratic. Whether or not a group will be a "good" group depends upon the interaction of many factors, and a prime determinant will always be the personal needs of its members.

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<sup>17</sup> I am indebted for this example to members of my seminar in group process, in the Workshop in Human Development at the University of Chicago, summer 1948.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

# Accepting and Clarifying the Child's Feelings

BETTY MADIGAN AND MARY LOUISE STEADMAN

**T**EACHERS as a group invest a great deal of time and effort in their attempts to understand children better and to help children understand and accept themselves. Yet they are not always able to rest comfortably in the feeling that the results attained in desirable psychological development of children and in democratic human relations are commensurate with the efforts they are putting forth.

Across the country, in courses in child development, education, psychology, guidance, and counseling; in professional workshops; in in-service teacher-education programs; and in professional group meetings—over and over again, teachers are saying, "Things aren't going as well as we would like. We not only recognize a need for help, we are trying to find it. We feel that teaching would be more rewarding if we could get along better with children." "What about discipline? What about guidance?" "How can we be concerned with the individual child and help him with his problems, and not let him interfere with the good of the whole group? On the other hand, how can we build good group morale if we sacrifice any individual because of his needs or problems? He is a part of the group, too." "If you could just help us help kids so that we can teach and they can learn, things would be better," commented one teacher who had previously said, "Teaching school used to be easy compared with this modern business of teaching children."

### Limitations of Teacher-Pupil Conferences

In their attempts to help children, teachers often use an individual conference or counseling situation. They usually assure the child, with great sincerity, that he can talk with them in confidence and that they will do their best to help him. The child often accepts this invitation and makes a sincere effort to communicate what he feels to be his problem.

Then, for some unknown reason, in spite of the sincerity and willingness of both to participate, they come to an impasse. The child feels "on the spot," and the teacher, in turn, feels frustrated and defeated.

What more can I do? asked one teacher who felt that she had not only given a boy a great deal of time after school to talk about his problems, but had even offered to tutor him in his subjects if he would promise to be different.

Another teacher, in describing a "counseling period" with a boy, said:

I made him admit that he has never liked women teachers and that he doesn't like me. You see, just what chance do I have in getting along with that imp? I just wish that this school had a mid-year promotion plan and that I could pass him on. We'll be fighting it out the rest of the year, because I don't intend to let him run over me.

Another teacher, who is popular with his students, comments:

I'm not sure that I'm much help to students. I've never had any trouble in getting them to talk to me. In fact, I'm often surprised and shocked at the things they tell me—but I hope I don't show it. My problem is—What should I do with the things they tell me about themselves? I'm not sure that just listening is enough; I'm not sure either that just telling me these things always helps the youngsters. How do you get them to understand themselves? Sometimes I think I understand them and ought to point things out, but if I did, they'd close up on me and call me a "reformer" like they do some of these other teachers around here.

We must be careful not to generalize from these three examples. Yet it seems fair to say that sometimes a teacher-pupil conference results in the child's feeling relieved and relaxed, and in the teacher's added confidence that she is on the right track. Sometimes, however, the child expresses more and different kinds of feelings than the teacher had bargained for—more than the teacher can comfortably handle. Although many conferences result in better understanding and feelings, others bring about more openly expressed feelings of frustration and defeat.

There is another limiting factor to a teacher's success in an extra-class interview. The actual situation in which the troublesome or significant behavior occurred usually has a very different connotation to all the persons involved than the interview situation in which that behavior is being examined in retrospect. The dynamics in each situation are quite different. It is one thing to be successful in dealing with a child in a face-to-face interview; it is quite another thing to be successful in dealing with that child's troublesome behavior at the moment it is occurring within the classroom.

The teacher who finds it necessary to relegate the exploration and solution of problems that occur in the classroom to the "after school," "out of

the group" situation is, by and large, missing her best opportunities for helping children. It is likewise true that if a teacher is to become more skilled and competent in handling tensions or other personal relationship problems as these arise in a classroom, she will need to consider her relationship with her entire class, as well as her relationships with individual students.

While the question of teacher-pupil relationships will be discussed in later sections of this chapter, at this point it may be well to suggest that the teacher's role will be a constructive one if she can relate herself to students on the basis of *accepting and clarifying feelings* as these are expressed in classroom behavior. Where the emotional climate of the classroom is such that children and the teacher can express their feelings, knowing that these will be accepted and, when necessary, clarified, we find a relationship between students and teacher characterized by mutual respect and acceptance. In such a climate there is inclusion of each other in group processes and activities.<sup>1</sup>

### **'Reasoning' with the Child versus Accepting the Child's Feelings**

In dealing with children either in individual conferences or in classroom situations, we find teachers often "reasoning with" a child and "persuading" him. Often the teacher is persuading the child to accept her, the teacher's, reasons for his behavior. The child is often asked, "Why did you do this? What was your reason? Did you mean to do that? Why didn't you think about such and such an outcome before you acted? Now what?" The assumption underlying these questions is that the basis for the child's action was conscious, deliberate, and rational. When the child answers that he doesn't know the why of his behavior, he is suspected of withholding the reasons, of dodging responsibility, or of being uncooperative.

Sometimes we find that the teacher is ascribing to the child her own feelings, or at least those she deems appropriate for the child in the situation. "Aren't you ashamed? (You should be, you know.)" Again, the teacher tends to describe the child to herself in terms which are expressive of her own feelings toward the child. For example, "We could have expected that from you. You are always the trouble maker. You just don't fit into this group."

Teacher-pupil relationships are too often geared primarily to the thinking process. They are direct attempts to get children to think differently; to be more reasonable in their behavior; to see the inconsistency between the way they behave and what they know they should have done; to realize that the behavior is inappropriate and unacceptable; and to alter the child's behavior in certain specific ways.

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter Seventeen, "Understanding Group Processes."

Sometimes the "reasoning" approach is very effective and results in changes in behavior for the child or for the group. However, we need to ask, "Effective in what way? With what consequences to the individual? And with what consequences to society?" We must not define "effective" as synonymous with "desirable." Learning what the person in authority wants, and behaving in such a way as to gain her approval, may or may not be desirable child behavior.

In many instances, the "reasoning" approach is not even effective, as we would all be quick to testify. We have all felt sympathetic toward the adult who says, "I've talked and talked and talked to that child—but I don't seem to get anywhere!"

There is another and different trend in the attempts that teachers are making to understand children better and to help the child better understand himself. This trend might be described as *a communication between a teacher and a child based on the acceptance and clarification of feelings of all concerned*. In conferences or in actual classroom situations where the emphasis is on the acceptance and clarification of feelings, we see the teacher operating in a medium of verbal or other behavioral expressions of feelings and attitudes. She indicates to the child that the way the child feels about his own actions in a given situation, or about things in general, is important to both of them.

The teacher, in doing this, is apt to make such comments as these:

How do you really feel about this?

I wonder if this is what you mean?

How does this seem to you?

I'm trying to understand this better from your angle. It would help me if you felt able to give me *your* picture of it.

Sometimes it's hard to tell someone else how we actually feel about things. I'd like you to know that I'm interested, and I'll keep things confidential if you should feel that you'd like to discuss them with me.

This teacher demonstrates, by her own attitudes toward the child, a willingness to see the situation from the child's perspective before judging any particular behavior. The teacher also listens in a non-critical manner if the child wishes to express and share his feelings, thereby clarifying them. The teacher makes the child aware of his personal responsibility to regulate his own behavior and helps him to understand that, by becoming clearer about his feelings and their relation to his behavior, he will become more self-directing.

### Why Are Feelings Important?

We might ask, at this point, why there are such divergent views and approaches to teacher-pupil relationships and what is the reason for



the current emphasis on feelings and attitudes. Why is the trend away from "right reasoning" as an adequate basis for behavior? Isn't it still true that unless people think clearly, their behavior will be confused and irrational? Are we implying that an "acceptance and clarification of feelings" approach advocates the abandoning of reason as a basis for behavior?

Not at all! Rather, we are stating a concept that can be defended by research findings in the area of psychotherapy, that a person does not make rational, logical choices or decisions in the area of human relations until he is emotionally free to do so.<sup>2</sup> By being "emotionally free" we mean being clear about his feelings and the personal meanings which exist for him in any given situation. It is by helping children to clarify their feelings that we are able to help them to think clearly about their problems and become rationally functioning persons. It is after the child and the teacher and perhaps other members of the group have clarified the feelings that are operating in a situation, that they are emotionally free and ready to think, together or separately, and to behave in a problem-solving manner.

We have just said that feelings and emotions can be an impediment to thinking. When a person is confused, or has conflicting feelings, or when he is unhappy or disturbed by the intensity of his feelings, or when he feels guilty about their negative quality, he is usually so preoccupied with these feelings that he is not "free" to behave in a direct problem-solving manner. His perception of a situation will be colored by the confusion and distress that he is experiencing. The saying, "So-and-so sees with what is behind his eyes, and hears with what is behind his ears," seems to be a realistic description of perception; it points up the personal coloring or distorting we all do when we see or hear. We imprint our own feelings upon any situation, before we can think or reason about it.

Feelings become, in a sense, the meeting ground of an individual and his environment. The individual interprets each new situation in terms of what it holds for *him* and what he knows about himself. The individual also interprets *himself* in terms of his feelings and attitudes; his picture of himself is a highly personalized and emotionalized one.

Feelings form, furthermore, the medium through which an individual can express the personal meaning that a situation has for him.

These theoretical considerations may become clearer if we apply them to specific examples. Willis is in the stage of early adolescence. Let us see if we can understand how he perceives himself.

Willis starts by telling us his height, weight, eye and skin color. If we are looking at him, we could check these items as he mentions them.

<sup>2</sup> Curran, Charles A. *Personality Factors in Counseling*. New York: Grune and Stratton, 1945.

If he stops there, we do not know any more about Willis than we could have observed for ourselves.

However, if he goes on to tell us how he feels about his body build, we begin to see what it means to him. If, for example, he resents being unable to participate on high-school athletic teams because he is too small; or if he feels that only boys several inches taller than he have any luck in getting dates with the girls, we begin to get a clue to his feelings and to what his physique means to him. We begin to get some understanding of Willis through these feelings. We see him differentiating himself from his peers, and defining himself on the basis of the personal meaning these "objective" criteria have for him. We see that Willis views himself not only in terms of his personal characteristics, but he considers himself limited in the ability or opportunity to make friends and to participate in human relations as he would choose.

We can see also that as these attitudes toward himself and toward others are formulated, they become a background for his perception of future situations; and they have significant bearing on his chances of achieving his goals. His feelings color, also, the way he relates himself to his peers, and the means he adopts to achieve his goals.

Thus, to understand Willis we must know and accept all these personal meanings which he has incorporated into his view of himself—in short we must understand his feelings.

Let us look next at a fifth-grade arithmetic class.

Many children in the group are "behaving," are "busy," and seem to be learning the concepts which the teacher is explaining. They are often described as "good, desirable students who make good and measurable progress"—in arithmetic, at least.

In this group is a lad named Richard who does not "pay attention" to mathematics. According to the teacher, this boy takes delight in aggravating her by his inattention to the lesson and his many attempts to disturb and distract his neighbors. The teacher feels that she has been very patient, but that the child's behavior is becoming unendurable, especially at times when there are visitors present.

We could describe and analyze this situation in its most minute, observable details. We could photograph the room and have a good picture of the physical arrangements of the room, the people in it. We could see Richard's position in relation to the others. We could analyze the teacher's overt behavior, her techniques of presenting her lesson material, her way of helping children with their problems of fractions, and her handling of Richard.

In order to *understand* the situation, however, in contrast to analyzing it, we have to get into the "inside" of that situation—into the area of feelings and personal meanings for the class, for Richard, and for the teacher. Undoubtedly, the causative factors operating in this situation are multiple. The point we want to emphasize is that for the teacher to understand Richard's behavior she will have to know

how the boy sized up the situation; what he has decided it would demand of him; and what role, consistent with the picture he has of himself, he feels able to play.

In spite of many reasons which might seem plausible as explanations to the teacher, she will not truly understand Richard until she understands Richard's reason, which might be, for example, an inability to picture himself as an "understander" of fractions. Thus, to pay attention to the lesson and try to solve the problems would be, in his estimation, futile and silly; whereas gaining attention from classmates would be rewarding to him, even if disturbing to others. If Richard feels that it is impossible for him to learn mathematics, perhaps withdrawing his attention from the lesson may make the situation less threatening.

We will let the reader, at this point, supply other interpretations which might help him understand Richard. We want to suggest that the reader, like Richard, will interpret the situation on the basis of his own feelings—on what personal meanings it holds for *him*.

### What Should Be the Role of the Teacher?

If feelings and attitudes are as significant determinants of human behavior as we have been suggesting, it is important that teachers learn to understand and cope with them. How can teachers create an atmosphere in which the child is free to express his feelings and his motives?

The problem is that of creating a good psychological climate in the classroom. As used here, good climate means the friendly, informal atmosphere of the school which is characterized by acceptant and permissive attitudes of the adults toward the children.

#### Acceptance and Permissiveness

A statement adapted from Carl Rogers helps to clarify the concept of acceptance. The teacher's attitude needs to be one of genuine willingness to understand. "This does not mean approval of . . . the student. . . . It means a deep and tolerant acceptance of him as a person different from the teacher, and an acceptance of his right to be different."<sup>3</sup>

Permissiveness is another important attitude in creating a climate in which a child feels free to express his attitudes and feelings. Permissiveness may be defined as a relationship in which every expression of attitude or feeling is permitted. To state these concepts in another way, a permissive and accepting atmosphere or climate exists when the individuals in it feel free to be themselves; to admit to themselves—and possibly to one or more

<sup>3</sup> Rogers, Carl R. "Nondirective Counseling as an Effective Technique." *Frontier Thinkers in Guidance*. Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1945. See also Rogers, Carl R. *Counseling and Psychotherapy*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1942.

other persons—how they actually feel about themselves or about other people or about experiences which have particular meaning for them. This meaning may be loaded with emotional charges, positive or negative.

Feelings of hostility, confusion, and doubt, are frequently not allowed to come to the surface in the typical classroom. Yet it seems that if such negative feelings can be expressed without meeting censure on the part of the teacher, the student will then be freer to state his positive ideas and feelings.

In the pages to follow, let us consider examples of acceptant and non-acceptant attitudes of teachers.

Let us return to the illustration of Richard. Would the teacher have been in a much better position to help Richard and to save the day in the arithmetic class, if she had been able to verbalize—in an accepting manner, the boy's feelings of inability to do the job? if she could have said, in effect, "You don't seem to be able to join us in what we are trying to do," or "You seem to feel that you can't do this," or even, "You want to disturb things; you would rather have the other boys and girls paying attention to you than to the arithmetic lesson."

By accepting and communicating the feelings which Richard has been expressing, the teacher will put herself into a more workable relationship with the boy and with the others in the group. Does this mean that her interest and loyalty to the group are sacrificed? No. Nor does it mean that she is permitting Richard to continue to disrupt the class. She might say, "I can understand, if this is the way you really feel. It isn't wrong to feel that way. But interrupting and disturbing those of us who want to learn isn't fair."

The teacher, in accepting Richard's feelings, is not condoning his behavior. The teacher cannot suspend arithmetic, for example, because this boy cannot relate himself to the lesson. But the teacher does not interfere with his right to define the situation in terms which are meaningful to him; she helps him see that his role is not compatible with the total situation. It is Richard's *perception* of the situation which must be changed if his behavior is to be changed. And not until he feels *accepted* is it possible for him to re-evaluate the situation.

Let us take another example, this time from the case study of Dan, a seven-year-old.

This morning during library book reports, I asked Dan why he didn't take library books home as often as he did last year. At first he just said that he didn't like to face audiences. I told him that we weren't an audience but just a group of his friends. He answered, "Well, it feels like an audience." I told him that I wanted him to have a good time reading the books, but I would not make him give the report to everybody, but only to me. He still didn't choose a library book, however.

Although there is always danger of over-interpreting a single incident, there are nevertheless several questions which arise from this anecdote. Could the teacher have come closer to Dan's real feeling by restating, "You really don't like to face audiences, do you?"

Dan seemed to be expressing real feeling which the teacher did not catch. Instead she set out a solution to the problem.

Some light may be thrown on Dan's situation by another excerpt.

Dan's mother called me tonight. She said he wanted her to find out what a frieze was. She said he didn't want to ask me because he hated to admit that he didn't know. I guess the time I explained the meaning of the word must have been one of the times when he wasn't listening.

It is interesting to note that the teacher here does not accept any of the responsibility for Dan's not knowing the word. She seems not to recognize that the fault may have been hers—that Dan did not feel free enough to ask a question in the class situation. How long will he continue to be interested in school if he feels he cannot ask questions or get them answered?

As teachers we frequently tend to be moralistic about, rather than acceptant of, children's feelings. Let us consider the following example:

One day at school, Tina drew a picture while Miss Andrews, her teacher, stood above her and watched. Tina drew a child with great round tears streaming from her eyes to the floor. In one hand the picture-child held a fashionable woman's hat; in the other hand what was unmistakably a knife. The knife had been plunged into the brim of the hat, tearing a great gash neatly across.

Miss Andrews shuddered.

Tina looked up and muttered nervously, "You see, the girl took her mother's best hat and cut it up with a knife. And she took her jewelry too and threw it in the ocean."

Miss Andrews was gently reproachful. "Tina," she said, "that isn't a nice picture. Don't you think you'd better put it in the wastebasket and start all over? I know you can do something much nicer." Into the wastepaper basket went Tina's picture, and with it her attempt to get rid of what was wrong inside her. The week before, Tina's mother had left her father, taking Tina along. For two nights she had cried herself to sleep. She didn't understand the whole business. All she knew was that she wasn't going to be with her beloved daddy any more and that there was a hard ache inside her and a feeling of bitter blame against her mother who, she felt vaguely, had made this thing happen.

Obediently now she drew a more acceptable picture—a conventionalized house with smoke coming out of the chimney and a road leading up to the house.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> This incident is taken from Baruch, Dorothy. *Glass House of Prejudice*. New York: William Morrow and Co., 1946. p. 93-95.

Tina's case is an obvious example of how a teacher, by refusing to accept a child's feelings, sets up a further obstacle to the child's mental health. Could this teacher have helped Tina handle her negative emotions and see her family situation in a new light, if she had been more permissive?

In most instances, of course, the child's situation is somewhat less dramatic. The following is a more typical incident:

Today Jean and Jermae were sitting together. They were laughing and whispering. I spoke to them. They stopped, but in a short time were talking and chewing gum noisily. I told them to take the gum out of their mouths. They both went to the wastebasket. In a very short time, Jean was chewing gum again and very obviously wanted me to see her. I asked her rather severely why she didn't do as I asked her. She looked directly at me very defiantly but did not answer. Then I said, "Put it in the wastebasket." She looked pouty, went to the basket, stood there a minute, then started to her seat. After she got part way to her seat, she stopped, looked at me, then turned and very quickly put her gum in the basket. After doing so, she came to her seat and put her face in her hands. Her face was very red.

In this episode, Jean seemed to be seeing how far she could go with the teacher. She wanted to be independent and do as she pleased; and at the same time she wanted to maintain her dependence upon, and the consequent approval of, the teacher. The teacher's seeming indifference to the conflict does not help Jean gain insight into her behavior. An acceptant and permissive teacher might have overlooked the gum-chewing during the class period, and as classes were changing she might have talked with Jean. Keeping her comments on an impersonal level, talking about the rules of the school and reasons for those rules, she might then go on to express her understanding of Jean's desire to break the rules. Because the teacher would not attack or threaten Jean, the child might have been able to verbalize her feelings and to gain some insight into some of the factors causing her behavior.

An acceptant and permissive atmosphere does not mean an atmosphere of *laissez faire*. It is one thing to accept a child's feelings; it is another thing to allow the child to behave in such a way that he becomes the victim of his every whim. As has been said, the expression of negative feelings usually frees the child to go ahead to clarify his positive feelings and to work out constructive behavior—behavior which is in keeping with his own ideas as well as the ideas of the adult.

Nor is permissiveness synonymous with passivity. The teacher is always on the alert for those feelings and those motives within the child which will lead to positive and worthwhile activity. By accepting the child as



he is, and by accepting his feelings with neither approval nor disapproval, the teacher frees the child to act in constructive ways.

Perhaps the following illustration will clarify this point:

(In one elementary class of ten-year-olds, a boy named Jerry was being ostracized.) The teacher had seen this situation coming on. Ever since the start of the semester, Jerry had been an outcast and the butt of every joke in the class. She now stood confronting the children, telling herself that many things in their lives must have driven them to this. Finally, she said, without any condemnation in her voice but as a simple observation, "It looks to me as if you were feeling very, very mean." The children riveted their attention on her, surprised that her voice sounded matter-of-fact and interested instead of angry. "When people feel mean," she continued, "it's awfully good to tell about it. You can tell about it in lots of ways, by talking or acting or drawing or writing about it. I wonder which you would like to do."

They decided they wanted to draw about it. Before they started, the teacher assured them that they could make their pictures show mean feelings coming out in any way they liked. . . . Some drew pictures of people setting fires to houses. One boy drew a man and a woman and a baby with nooses around their necks, hanging from three black gallows. He told the teacher, "That's the mother and father and baby. The big brother told on them and then they got hung." When they were through with the drawings, the children crowded into small groups, looking at different pictures. The teacher smiled to herself as she noticed two of the boys who had been among Jerry's worst persecutors. Their arms were now around his shoulders. They were intimately pursuing the friendship that they had denied before. With occasional other releases of a similar nature, the term went by without any return to scapegoating. The children had discovered that there were other ways, and actually more comfortable ones of letting their feelings out.<sup>5</sup>

A second example, involving an older group of boys and girls, again illustrates how the acceptance of feelings leads to constructive activity:

A school Service Club had been in existence since the middle of the war, when it had been organized under adult pressure, for the purpose of selling war bonds and stamps. Its membership was made up of an elected member from each of the homerooms in seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth grades, totaling about thirty members. The group had never been an important one, nor one to which the students were eager to be elected. The adult advisers had tried for several years to change the nature of the club and to make of it a community service group, but these efforts had met with only partial success. Nevertheless, the club continued, elections were held, advisers were appointed. The group was dominated by a group of eighth-grade boys who tended to impede progress by belittling suggestions for activities,

<sup>5</sup> Baruch, *op. cit.*, p. 171-72.



or by refusing to cooperate. But even these boys became frustrated by the inactivity and monotony of the group.

On this day the group had been evaluating their accomplishments during the year. They were expressing their feelings about the lack of unity in the group and necessity for action, a need to do something for the school and to get recognition by the school. The adviser who ordinarily took an active role suggesting, approving, disapproving, decided to sit back and allow the students to have free rein. In other words, she chose this particular day to try a change in role.

Suddenly, one girl said, "Let's paint the tables in the new lunchroom and make the room more attractive." This suggestion was greeted in various ways:—"Where would we get the paint?" "We can't do that, we don't have time." "That's a good idea."

After a few more reactions from the group, mostly favorable, the adviser helped the students see possible ways in which they might put such a plan into operation. At the close of the meeting, committees had been set up, plans for murals, obtaining paint, and brushes, had all been thought out—largely by the children themselves. At the next meeting everybody came in blue jeans and went to work. The rest of the school took notice of the Service Club—they had all worked together and had been successful.

In this example, a change in the adult role seemed to work wonders. Before, when the adult advisers had been promoting, urging, planning, the group had accomplished very little. Now, when a more permissive and acceptant atmosphere had been established, the students expressed their dissatisfactions, clarified and elaborated their own motives, and went ahead to plan and carry out constructive action.

### **Helping the Child To Understand Himself**

Should a teacher be expected to accept and clarify all of the feelings that gain expression by the students in a class? Obviously, this would be expecting the impossible. In fact, it is doubtful that this would be necessary even if it were possible.

Are there certain feelings that are more important than others to which teachers might respond? Those attitudes which a child gives as describing himself, his picture of himself and of his abilities, will prove very fruitful ones for the teacher to reflect and help him to explore further. This is particularly true where these self-references are expressions of negative attitudes or self-doubts, or feelings of inadequacy or of inability to cope with a situation. If a teacher can verbally accept these and mirror them to the child, she has demonstrated that she can accept the child in the way in which the child sees himself. She is not imposing any values of her own upon the child; neither is she trying to modify these feelings, nor is she trying to convince the child that he is different than he sees himself. Rather, she is literally saying, "So, this is you, as you really feel you are." By accepting these feel-

ings, the teacher also is saying in effect, "I can let you be as you are. You have value because you are you. It's all right for you to be, or to feel this way and I'm glad that you are free enough with me to be able to tell me and to help me understand you as you are."

The teacher who acted in this role will have helped the child move from the feeling-expressing to the feeling-seeing, or understanding, stage. She will have helped the student function in a new way—that of seeing more clearly the personal meanings which life is holding for him. The child's behavior will become more consistent with these meanings. The teacher will have helped him move to a state of exploring other attitudes, of seeing the relation of one with another—this is the avenue on which insight is gained.

To summarize, by clarifying feelings, by inter-relating them, and by tying them into one's perception of a situation, an individual comes to a new kind of understanding of himself—into a new role, an insight-gaining role. He comes to understand not only his feelings, but also their bearing on his whole pattern of behavior. By understanding these ties, he is better able to cope with them and becomes able to function, to behave in a free, understanding, insightful—or rational, logical manner.

### Helping Children Become Self-Directing

Acceptant and permissive attitudes will tend to help students become more self-consistent, self-directing, and self-motivating.

The definition of acceptance pointed out that the teacher recognizes each child as a unique individual. Teachers must understand the individual's need to differentiate himself from others. As the child recognizes himself as a unique individual, he must be helped to accept that uniqueness and to integrate his experiences into a picture that is consistent with his idea of himself, *i.e.*, to be self-consistent.

Behavior which is sometime labeled "bad" is often nothing more than behavior which aims at preserving the consistency of the personality. For example, teachers expect boys in early adolescence to be kind in dealing with their peers. They often set standards of kindness which are quite out of keeping with the boy's own concept of how a boy of his age should act. The pre-adolescent boy in our society is aggressive and assertive in his relationships with his peers. He should not be made to feel guilty because of such behavior.

Another area in which an acceptant and permissive attitude is necessary is in the encouragement of self-direction on the part of the child. One phase of the individual's uniqueness is his ability to work out his own problems, *i.e.*, to be self-directing.

Within the school situation, problem-solving offers many opportunities for developing greater self-direction. Each person has a different percep-

tion of a problem. This perception is all-important because it will determine the attack upon the problem. As adults, we have our own perceptions of a problem and its solution and we frequently try to impose our own solution upon the child. The child may accept our method. But the question immediately arises, how real is the solution to the child? The acceptant adult will enable the child to see the problem in his own terms and to develop adequate means for solving it. This method of problem-solving results in experience which is meaningful, and in learning which is lasting. If the child's experiences in school are consistent with his picture of himself and if he is permitted to be largely self-directing, much of his activity will be self-motivated.

When both teachers and pupils can feel the same and can feel differently, when they can allow each other the opportunity to explore the meanings behind these differences of feelings, they will be living together in an atmosphere in which desirable psychological development of all members of the group will be furthered; learning will be promoted; and the basic acceptance of individual differences will make democracy a living classroom experience.

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